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Dynamics, Problems and Policies

RURAL *LANDLESSNESS* IN KENYA

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**Institute for Development Studies
University of Nairobi**

Dynamics, Problems and Policies

RURAL LANDLESSNESS IN KENYA

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Problems and Policies

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**Dynamics, Problems and Policies
Rural Landlessness in Kenya**

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INTRODUCTION

In Kenya and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the majority population is in the rural areas and an even higher percentage depends on agriculture for their livelihood. To meet their food requirements, most people in the rural areas produce rather than purchase the food they consume. Apparently there has been a greater appreciation of these facts than ever before due to the recent food crisis which has necessitated a closer examination of the root causes on hunger and malnutrition in the African continent.

Since in the production of food by rural residents land is a crucial factor, questions have arisen regarding the extent of land availability, quality of land, competing uses of land, and most importantly, land ownership. It is in this context that the growing concern over landlessness, particularly in the rural areas, can be understood. Those without land in the rural areas and lacking an alternative source of income are therefore doomed to poverty and become vulnerable to malnutrition and starvation.

The purpose of this analysis is, first, to try and give a national assessment of the extent of rural landlessness in Kenya. The focus in this regard will be on defining rural landlessness and on that basis providing a measurement of the problem in the Kenyan context. The second objective is to ascertain the socio-economic status of the rural landless in the country. This entails an examination of their present socio-economic conditions with a view to determining the multiple causes and economic processes engendering landlessness.

Thirdly, the assessment focuses on government policies that directly or indirectly affect the rural landless and the nature of the impact of these policies. The ultimate objective is to develop policies for improving the condition of the rural landless particularly their access to land, and to income and employment in the rural areas.

It is envisaged that subsequent comparative analysis of a series of national assessments will permit the identification of national and international policies as well as projects that benefit the growing number of landless in the rural areas of many developing countries.*

* "Terms of Reference and Guidelines for National Assessments of Rural Landlessness", Human Resources, Institutions and Agrarian Reform Division, FAO, Rome, Nov. 1984.

This assessment is essentially a desk review of the nature and extent of rural landlessness in Kenya. There is therefore a great reliance on secondary sources of information. However, because of the limitations of these sources and due to the fact that the data was collected for different purposes, it was necessary to supplement the information and a brief field survey was conducted to collect primary data to supplement the data available from secondary sources. Kiambu district of Central Province was chosen for this purpose mainly because it is a leading district in terms of rural landlessness problems in Kenya.

Regarding methodology, two contrasting divisions in the district in terms of the rural landlessness problem were first identified. Six sub-locations where the problem is rampant were then chosen and cluster sampling method used to identify 168 respondents. The respondents were subsequently interviewed using a questionnaire containing some closed questions but mostly open-ended questions. The subjects covered by the questions included household background, employment and income, migration, farming activity, food and nutrition, extension services, access to services and amenities, and landlessness..

The analysis is organised into seven major sections. These include an introduction, a historical background to landlessness in Kenya, definitions and measurement of rural landlessness, the impact of government policies, socio-economic status of the rural landless, policy issues on rural landlessness and summary of conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER I

LANDLESSNESS IN KENYA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Land Alienation under Colonialism

By the time of colonization at the turn of the 19th Century, Kenya had several systems of land tenure. These can be summarized as the communal system among the Masai, the combined individual and familial system of the Kikuyu, and the feudal system of Mumia Kingdom. The other people in pre-colonial Kenya had land tenure systems that were more or less similar to one of the above systems or a combination of two or more of them. In practically all of them, everybody had a share in either ownership or use of land, or both. In this sense landlessness was practically non-existent.

Beginning 1895, Kenya experienced traumatic changes in land tenure systems. The most significant change involved the colonial introduction of a completely new mode of production — the capitalist mode of production in agriculture, thus forcing on the African peoples a new relation with land both in terms of ownership and infrastructure. The initial phase in this direction involved the colonial state-backed alienation of huge tracts of land from the Africans thus reducing their status from that of rightful owners or users, to that of non-owners and non-rightful users of such land. This was the primary step in spawning landlessness as a socio-economic phenomenon in the country.

The second phase involved the employment of the alienated Africans as wage and/or squatting labourers in the alienated land now owned by European settlers thus confirming permanent separation from the land they now worked. This process also involved the introduction of a hut and poll tax system. The combined effect of these moves was to force increasing numbers of the African population out of their land in the so-called reserves into these European farms. They now eventually risked having their land or use-rights in their places of origin being appropriated by fellow Africans after which repossession was an impossible task.

The process of land alienation was most intensive in the first quarter of this century. It was temporarily slowed down by the depression (1923-29) and thereafter by the uncertainties of the pre-World War II years. The period after the war saw a fresh drive to alienate more land, this time covering more of the marginal areas mainly suitable for ranching.

Colonial appropriation of land and alienation of a large section of the African people produced a situation where by 1930, probably more than 15,000 Kiambu Kikuyu had lost their land ownership while a similar number lost their communal or "tenant at will" use of land. Thus, approximately 30,000 Kikuyu had lost land rights in Kiambu District alone. About half that number lost land rights in Murang'a and Nyeri Districts. The total loss of land among the Kikuyu could therefore involve well over 45,000 people.¹ The annual reports for the period indicate that there were 41,156 Africans in the European-settled areas of Nakuru and Naivasha and these would seem to support our estimates given that the majority of Africans in these areas were Kikuyu.²

By 1945, there were about 203,000 squatters and labourers in European farms of whom 101,000 were Kikuyu resident labourers on European farms and about 21,000 more employed mainly in the government Department of Forestry. A substantial number of Africans in the settled area were not enumerated in this labour census and the total number of the Kikuyu in the alienated area must have been a lot more than 150,000 by 1945. No wonder that three years later, in 1948, the number of Kikuyu recorded as living outside their "native reserve" was more than 294,000 or nearly 29 per cent of the total Kikuyu population.³ Some of them lived in towns or in other African reserves, but nearly all of them had been effectively uprooted by the process of alienation. They were outside their reserves in search of work and or new land as a means of subsistence.

The process of alienation took a fresh turn when competition among Africans for the little land in the reserves began. Initially this took the form of expensive litigations that nearly always favoured the wealthier Africans. Later on, there was the State of Emergency

between 1952 and 1959 when several of those held in detention camps returned to find that other people had secured irrevocable legal claims to their land. In the same period, the people suspected of being members of the Mau Mau or their sympathizers had their land and other property confiscated by the colonial government. In all, the number of Kikuyu landless must have reached more than 90,000 families by the end of 1959 when the state of emergency ended, and no doubt constituted the bulk of landless in Kenya. No wonder that in 1960, the Minister for Agriculture acknowledged that there were 130,000 landless families.⁴

Similar estimates are not immediately available for other areas of Kenya where colonial alienation of land took place. It is however clear that huge tracts of land were lost in the Kikumbuliu and Mua Hills of Ukambani. In addition, some land was also alienated in the Nyanza and Western Provinces. The greatest part of the alienated land in Kenya was in any case in the Rift Valley Province. The main areas alienated included the Uasin Gishu, Laikipia and Nakuru Districts and some parts of Nandi District and Sotik portion of the Kipsigis land unit.

In the process of land alienation in the Rift Valley, the main victims were the Masai who were forcibly removed from Nakuru and Laikipia Districts and thrown into the less favourable land of Narok and Kajiado Districts. This was the change that greatly reduced the survival capacity of the Masai, making them prone to recurrent famines resulting from prolonged droughts which caused them great losses in dead livestock.

By the end of the colonial period a total of more than 7.5 million acres had been alienated and were in the hands of about 3,600 European farmers. About 6,350,000 acres of these were owned under a 999 year lease, 591,000 acres under 99 year lease, while 560,000 acres were freehold.⁵ Of the 7.5 million acres, nearly 2.5 million acres were suitable for cultivation, a large part of them being used for mixed farming (livestock and crop production) and plantation industries (mainly coffee, tea and sisal).⁶

Meanwhile, only 11.65 million acres out of the unalienated 120 million acres were available for cultivation by the African population.

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The rest received insufficient rainfall in a normal year and were therefore unsuitable for crop cultivation. A portion of them were suitable for ranching but this was also greatly limited by the frequent droughts in the region. This meant that more than 8.36 million Africans had only 11.65 million acres of good land for cultivation (an average of 1.45 acres per person) as compared to about 7.5 million acres for about 55,759 Europeans (an average of 134.5 acres per person).⁷

In other words, the loss of 7.5 million acres was a great blow to African population whose technological and capital capacity was too low to be able to exploit the drier areas to cater for the rising population. It is in this light that land became a major concern to the colonial government which on the one hand sought to expand the European economy and on the other hand sought to have an effective way of dealing with increasing African inability to subsist due to landlessness.

Institutionalisation of Landlessness

A study of landlessness in Kenya should give a historical perspective of efforts to institutionalize the phenomenon of landlessness as well as efforts to deal with the problem of subsistence due to landlessness. The subsequent efforts of post independence government to deal with the problem of landlessness and lack of alternative means of subsistence also need attention.

The first colonial efforts towards institutionalization of landlessness involved bids to proletarianize the Africans, forcing or hiring them into European farms as wage labourers and as squatters. The idea here was to create conditions that freed a large section of the African population from land, converting them into reliance on cash payments or wages in kind for subsistence. Physically removed from their land and given the new means of survival, it was hoped that even their customary and sentimental attachment to land would soon disappear, thus, completely giving way to a new system of relationship between man and land whereby private ownership and use on the one hand and non-ownership or use of land on the other, would be the dominant arrangement for production.

However, immediately after World War II, the majority of European farmers sought to realize huge profits by enlarging the farm area under cultivation. Europeans allocated land under the Ex-Soldier Settlement Scheme and new arrivals were not keen on keeping squatters on their allocated land. The new anti-squatter wave meant the expulsion of more than half of the Africans residing in the alienated land leading to their repatriation to land reserves or for settlement anew in some unoccupied land elsewhere.

Repatriation was attempted and found to work only in cases where those involved could manage to be accompanied by their relatives in the African reserves. This option, however, was hindered by the fact that in several cases land pressure in the African reserves was so intense that the "expelled" squatters could not be accommodated or even be accepted there. They had become landless and people of no fixed legal abode.

It was the second alternative that was found acceptable to the landless squatters threatened with expulsion from the European farms. In spite of scarcity of unoccupied land, the pressure to have them removed led to the colonial government curving out parts of forest reserves for allocation to the displaced labourers and squatters who had no other land to go to. This exercise produced the first settlement schemes for Africans in form of the Olenguruone and Chepalungu Settlement Schemes in 1946-1948.⁸ Since that time, government forests have been easy preys as the state tries to deal with the more pressing cases of landlessness and poverty in the country. This, however, has always been a stop-gap measure, and one incapable of coping with the problem in its ever-growing magnitude.

The colonial state also created another safety-valve for the landless. This was in the form of irrigation schemes involving mainly Mwea, Perkerra and Hola Schemes. However, they were later on used as punitive work-schemes against the Mau Mau detainees during the state of emergency (1953-1959). Towards the end of the colonial period, these schemes became part of the overall programme to settle not just the landless but also others in search of more productive or profitable farming. These were initially designed as part of the Swynnerton Plan to be dealt with shortly.

What should be noted at this point is that African settlement schemes on the basis of land carved out of forests or reclaimed through limited irrigation projects could hardly have any impact on the problem of subsistence. This was largely so because the qualifying standards did not focus specifically on the landless.

Meanwhile, one of the most important innovations of the colonial administration in Kenya involved a long term plan to fundamentally change the system of land tenure among the African societies themselves. Contained in what was crystallized as the Swynnerton Plan of 1953, the innovation was to set in motion a drive to alter both the motion and fact of land ownership, as well as the attitude of Africans towards land as an indispensable means of subsistence.⁹ Under this plan, the small pieces of land scattered in several areas were to be consolidated into single units registered under individual ownership.

This was a departure from the traditional land tenure system in which communal ownership or control and disposal of land prevailed in most African societies. Under the Swynnerton Plan, both ownership and use of land, as well as the right to acquire and dispose of it, would be legally vested in the individual. The Western private property rights would therefore be extended to the African societies. By the same token, the exclusion of some members of these societies from ownership, use and control of land, would become legally institutionalized. Landlessness would therefore become one of the social products consequential from legal exclusivity of ownership under the new system.

In fulfilling the purpose of the Swynnerton Plan in institutionalization of African private property in land as part of the overall basis of the colonial system, the process of land consolidation would be handled in such a way as to "encourage" the owners of the small pieces of land to sell their holdings to the richer Africans who had larger land holdings. Small pieces of land were considered uneconomical and the Swynnerton Plan designed their elimination in favour of fewer economical holdings in the hands of the wealthier group of Africans referred to as the "middle class". In effect the Swynnerton Plan sought to force more Africans to lose land, thus

adding to the already big number of families who had become landless through various other manipulations of the colonial government.

The Swynnerton Plan was at the same time perhaps the first attempt to address the problem of subsistence due to landlessness. In brief, the plan clearly expected the bulk of the existing and expanding landless population to be employed in the European farms, in the consolidated farms of the wealthier fellow Africans, in the government sector and in other sectors of the economy. This was undoubtedly a major step in the institutionalization of a working class as a way of dealing with problems of subsistence due to landlessness. In addition, the rest of the landless population was expected to be self employed as traders, craftsmen, and such other non-farming activities, rendering it unnecessary for them to cling on to land as a means of subsistence. Consequently, various attempts were made to provide some state finances for the small-scale crafts and trading activities for the Africans in the second half of the 1950's, that is, during the period immediately prior to independence. However, the scale of such non-farming activities for the landless and unemployed Africans was minimalist and had insignificant contribution to the solution of the problem of subsistence due to landlessness. Moreover, the rate of growth of employment opportunities outside agriculture was so low that it never made any impact. Consequently, although efforts were undertaken to make landlessness a permanent feature in Kenya's political economy, colonial attempts to deal with it by way of providing alternative means of subsistence were repressive and did not get to the crux of the problem.

The problem was further complicated by the fact that while the Swynnerton programme managed to consolidate and register land in the Central Province, for example, by no means did it manage to reduce, let alone eliminate, what were referred to as "small and uneconomical" holdings. Legally, the holdings were registered in one person's name, but it was also quite often accepted, both legally and practically, that such a person was not necessarily the sole owner of the land but a trustee who held such land in trust for other members of the family.

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When subdivision of registered holdings eventually took place, it increased rather than reduced the number of "small and uneconomic" holdings. Moreover, Swynnerton's efforts to make the small holders sell their land to the wealthier Africans were a dismal failure. Indeed, small holders chose to cling on to such land, however, small they were, and whatever other employment and subsistence opportunities might arise. Only when one had an alternative, good and usually larger land holding, would they surrender the original small piece of land and more. To make matters worse, Africans everywhere in Kenya were not persuaded by the view that other forms of non-farming subsistence activities rendered land ownership irrelevant. To them, land ownership continued to form an important part of their socio-cultural life in which land meant a home and a means of identity as much as it was a means of subsistence.

Finally, the independence government in Kenya has been involved in tackling the problem of landlessness. Its efforts, however, have been greatly hampered by a combination of factors. First, the programme to settle Africans in the European farms, designed by European settlers and the British Government, backed by the World Bank and West Germany, provided only limited funds in form of foreign aid to the independence government towards the programme, and thus managed to delay the transfer of the rest of the farms to Africans. Secondly, the more prosperous Africans and the incoming political and bureaucratic elite vied for the same aid funds to buy for themselves land in the former White Highlands. They took big chunks of land available under the programme, thus leaving less land for the settlement of the landless. Like the colonial African settlement schemes, the post-independence government schemes towards landlessness have been incapable of tackling the problem in any significant way.

Be that as it may, several thousand people have been settled in the former White Highlands and in other parts of the country. This is mainly due to the fact that in addition to government effort in land redistribution, several land companies and co-operatives have been formed to pool resources together used to buy land from European

A Historical Background

owners. The question, however, still remains in respect of (a) the proportion of the settled Africans who were landless, and (b) the current actual level of landlessness in the country. It would also be interesting to inquire into other efforts to deal with landlessness by way of providing alternative means of subsistence to the victims. This paper tries to address these questions as it looks at the past and current agricultural and general economic policies and the way they may have contributed to growing landlessness in Kenya.

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adding to the already big number of families who had become landless through various other manipulations of the colonial government.

The Swynnerton Plan was at the same time perhaps the first attempt to address the problem of subsistence due to landlessness. In brief, the plan clearly expected the bulk of the existing and expanding landless population to be employed in the European farms, in the consolidated farms of the wealthier fellow Africans, in the government sector and in other sectors of the economy. This was undoubtedly a major step in the institutionalization of a working class as a way of dealing with problems of subsistence due to landlessness. In addition, the rest of the landless population was expected to be self employed as traders, craftsmen, and such other non-farming activities, rendering it unnecessary for them to cling on to land as a means of subsistence. Consequently, various attempts were made to provide some state finances for the small-scale crafts and trading activities for the Africans in the second half of the 1950's, that is, during the period immediately prior to independence. However, the scale of such non-farming activities for the landless and unemployed Africans was minimalist and had insignificant contribution to the solution of the problem of subsistence due to landlessness. Moreover, the rate of growth of employment opportunities outside agriculture was so low that it never made any impact. Consequently, although efforts were undertaken to make landlessness a permanent feature in Kenya's political economy, colonial attempts to deal with it by way of providing alternative means of subsistence were repressive and did not get to the crux of the problem.

The problem was further complicated by the fact that while the Swynnerton programme managed to consolidate and register land in the Central Province, for example, by no means did it manage to reduce, let alone eliminate, what were referred to as "small and uneconomical" holdings. Legally, the holdings were registered in one person's name, but it was also quite often accepted, both legally and practically, that such a person was not necessarily the sole owner of the land but a trustee who held such land in trust for other members of the family.

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When subdivision of registered holdings eventually took place, it increased rather than reduced the number of "small and uneconomic" holdings. Moreover, Swynnerton's efforts to make the small holders sell their land to the wealthier Africans were a dismal failure. Indeed, small holders chose to cling on to such land, however, small they were, and whatever other employment and subsistence opportunities might arise. Only when one had an alternative, good and usually larger land holding, would they surrender the original small piece of land and more. To make matters worse, Africans everywhere in Kenya were not persuaded by the view that other forms of non-farming subsistence activities rendered land ownership irrelevant. To them, land ownership continued to form an important part of their socio-cultural life in which land meant a home and a means of identity as much as it was a means of subsistence.

Finally, the independence government in Kenya has been involved in tackling the problem of landlessness. Its efforts, however, have been greatly hampered by a combination of factors. First, the programme to settle Africans in the European farms, designed by European settlers and the British Government, backed by the World Bank and West Germany, provided only limited funds in form of foreign aid to the independence government towards the programme, and thus managed to delay the transfer of the rest of the farms to Africans. Secondly, the more prosperous Africans and the incoming political and bureaucratic elite vied for the same aid funds to buy for themselves land in the former White Highlands. They took big chunks of land available under the programme, thus leaving less land for the settlement of the landless. Like the colonial African settlement schemes, the post-independence government schemes towards landlessness have been incapable of tackling the problem in any significant way.

Be that as it may, several thousand people have been settled in the former White Highlands and in other parts of the country. This is mainly due to the fact that in addition to government effort in land redistribution, several land companies and co-operatives have been formed to pool resources together used to buy land from European

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owners. The question, however, still remains in respect of (a) the proportion of the settled Africans who were landless, and (b) the current actual level of landlessness in the country. It would also be interesting to inquire into other efforts to deal with landlessness by way of providing alternative means of subsistence to the victims. This paper tries to address these questions as it looks at the past and current agricultural and general economic policies and the way they may have contributed to growing landlessness in Kenya.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITIONS, MEASUREMENTS AND NUMBERS

Introduction

Land in most African societies, particularly Kenya, is the most sensitive economic and political issue. This is mainly because the majority population depend for their livelihood on agricultural production systems in which land is the most critical input. The ownership or access to land is the main determinant of the well-being for most of the rural residents, although some may engage in employment off the farm, mostly part agriculture-based, to supplement earnings. But for one specific group, the rural poor, the ownership of a tiny piece of land or just access to such a piece is a matter of survival.

Landlessness in such societies is brought about primarily by factors beyond one's control. Furthermore, even when some actually become landless, due to incessant attempts to find ways and means to survive, both on and off the land, the situation is fluid making landlessness in some cases a transient phenomenon. An extreme case in point is the acquisition of land by a landless person elsewhere away from the original place of residence thereby ceasing to be landless. The argument is that the definition of who is landless in the rural areas, and more so the enumeration of the landless to determine the extent of rural landlessness in an African society, particularly in a country like Kenya, is in itself problematic.

The proposed definition for the study describes the rural landless as rural households with no land or permanent employment. Those with only a homestead comprising land producing income below a certain level are however included. The definition excludes those with access to land either as owners or operators, e.g. small owners, tenants and share croppers, if they are earning a certain level of income. Also excluded are rural artisans, shopkeepers, traders, money-lenders and others not directly dependent on access to land for their living.¹⁰ It is concluded that the rural landless so defined will coincide almost

entirely with the rural landless proletariat who make their living mainly through labour in the farm or non-farm sectors in rural areas.

The Households

In the Kenyan context, the extent to which the rural landless can be identified using the above definition hinges on conceptualisation of the household. The differing cultural and social backgrounds of various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups lead to different attitudes to family life, and this has a significant bearing on the household as a unit. Factors such as polygamous marriages, the extended family and the absentee head of household make it difficult to draw up a definition of the household that can be applied throughout Kenya and for all surveys focusing on the household as a unit of interest. There have been different definitions of the household in the various surveys that affect the composition of the household. As the possible sources of information for assessing rural landlessness, the surveys are consequently deficient in establishing precisely the extent of landlessness within the household.

In the 1962 Population Census, the household was defined as a group of people living together, whether or not they occupied the whole of a house and shared the principal meals.¹¹ In the various rural household income and expenditure surveys conducted in the late sixties and early seventies, the household is defined as being "constituted by one or more persons (generally of the same family) who eat together and have a common cash account". The two definitions have a common problem of using the criterion of sharing meals or eating from a "common pot" without reference to the source of food. In the Kenyan context, it seems that the sharing of meals cannot be taken literally since the practice of several polygamous wives cooking separately is common. If the criterion of land, for instance, was used, these wives would be seen, as indeed is often the case, to be bound together in one household.¹²

A modified definition has consequently been adopted for all subsequent surveys involving households. It states that "a household comprises a person, or group of persons, generally bound by ties of

kinship, who normally reside together under a single roof or several roofs within a single compound and who share the community of life in that they are answerable to the same head and share a common source of food". The definition retains the concept of residing together at least within a compound. At the same time it introduces the concept of sharing a community of life as revealed by the existence of a common head of household and reliance on the same block of land or other sources of income. Thus the polygamous wives will be included in the same household whatever the cooking arrangements may be. Moreover, if the land concerned is considered by the husband as being his holding, it is assumed then that all the wives are reliant on a common source of food even if each wife appears to be cultivating her own plots.¹³ The key problem which remains is how to single out landless individuals in a situation where there is a sharing of a community of life.

The Family

It is also useful, in view of the fact that the household is often confused for the family and vice versa, to have a working definition of the family. The family consists of "those members of the household. . . who are related, to a specific degree, through blood, adoption or marriage".¹⁴ In comparison to this definition of the family, the household definition prominently features economic factors implying that norms of interaction and relationships in the household are governed by economic motives. It is however, true, despite the reality of increasing nuclear families in situations of rapid socio-economic change, that African households are still dominated by kin members of the extended family.¹⁵

Thus, while recognising the increasing importance of the economic basis of the household, family ties and other cultural traits should not be ignored as they often have critical bearing on matters pertaining to land use. As a general rule, the family is often subsumed under the household but there is the important exception of "one family and two households" — with one household in the rural setting and the other in the urban setting.¹⁶

Rural Landless Employment and Incomes

The nature of employment and incomes in the rural areas also poses problems for an accurate identification of the rural landless. In view of the explicit statement in the definition advanced that the concern is with the poor rural landless, using the criterion of permanent employment in the assessment of rural landlessness is not particularly useful. This is the case especially in the Kenyan context where only about 15 per cent of the labour force is in wage employment.

The majority in the labour force are self-employed in agriculture as indicated by the fact that approximately 60 per cent of smallholders derive their income from farm operating surplus. Other sources of smallholder income include: regular employment 15 per cent, non-farm operating surplus 9 per cent, remittances from relatives 8 per cent, casual employment 7 per cent, and other gifts 2 per cent (*Table 20*). The main problem one is faced with in trying to identify the rural landless on the basis of income in such a situation is how to ascertain the income from a subsistence farming operation. For Kenya, no national data is available on either the incomes of non-estate agricultural labourers or the rate of expansion of such employment.

An attempt that has been made which is of particular relevance for this analysis is to estimate the broad distribution of income among households of different status including the landless.

Table 1 shows that poor smallholders having an income of less than KShs. 2,000 per year were nearly three million while the remaining rural poor were about 1.2 million. Smallholders are thus the largest group of the rural poor. They are followed in numbers by poor pure pastoralists. The next sizeable group are the poor landless having poor occupations comprised of 210,000 persons in 1976. They are about as many as squatters.

It is important to note that the landless with good occupations did not have anybody in the poor group category, underlining the fact that many landless households are not necessarily poor. The potentially poor subset of the landless should therefore exclude government workers, urban workers and shopkeepers. Petty traders should

Table 1:
The Distribution of Income Among Smallholders and Rural Poor Household

| | The rich (>8,000 spa) Population | The middle income group Population | The poor (<2,000 spa) Population | Total |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|------------|
| Smallholders | 1,998,000 | 5,352,000 | 2,990,000 | 10,340,000 |
| Landless (Poor occupations) | — | 210,000 | 210,000 | 420,000 |
| Landless (Good occupations) | 245,000 | — | — | 245,000 |
| Pure Pastoralists | — | 110,000 | 615,000 | 725,000 |
| Pastoralists who Farm | — | 50,000 | 25,000 | 75,000 |
| Migrant Farmers (Dry Lands) | — | 90,000 | 110,000 | 200,000 |
| Squatters | — | 400,000 | 200,000 | 600,000 |

Definitions

Source: Collier P. and Lal, D. "Poverty and Growth in Kenya", World Bank, Mimeo, 1979.

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however be included among the poor given the findings that they have the same social characteristics as agricultural labourers.¹⁷

The grouping of the households on the basis of employment and income gave a figure of 7.3 per cent landless rural households for all Kenya in 1976. There was however substantial variation between provinces as shown in *Table 2*.

Table 2:
The Landless Poor by Province 1976

| | % of households landless |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Central | 11.5 |
| Coast | 5.6 |
| Eastern | 6.9 |
| Nyanza | 3.8 |
| Rift Valley | 14.2 |
| Western | 2.6 |
| All Kenya | 7.3 |

Source: Collier and Lal, 1979.

Among those specifying employment within this grouping of landless rural households, 41 per cent are agricultural labourers. Furthermore 65 per cent of the agricultural labourers are employed in the Rift Valley. There is therefore an overlap between the landless poor and agricultural wage labourers but neither is a subset of the other. About one-half of all regular agricultural wage labourers appear to own smallholding.¹⁸

Poverty-Line and the Regional Distribution of Poverty

The overlap between the landless poor and agricultural wages labourers points to the fact that any income level which defines the criterion for "poverty" is essentially arbitrary. It has been rightly pointed out that the purpose of such an exercise is not to reveal how many people are poor (almost all Kenya smallholders are poor

according to Western usage of the word), but rather to be able to compare one rural group with another group which is better off. An adequate sample size is therefore usually retained on either side of the poverty income line and a viable but significant poverty group identified for policy purpose.¹⁹

A rival approach to the concept of a poverty-line is to identify some minimum required standard of nutrition, the income level at which food purchases attain this standard serving as the poverty line. In Kenya, fortunately the poverty-line suggested by these alternative approaches coincided according to 1974 data. The household income level of 2,000 shillings per annum assigns 30 per cent of the smallholder population to poverty and is a class limit in IRS 1. Thorbecke adopted a nutritional approach and deduced a critical level of household income of 2,050 shilling per annum at 1974 rural prices.²⁰ The data available on smallholder poverty by region is given in *Table 3*.

Table 3:
Small Poverty by Region, 1974

| Region | No. of poor households | % households in region who are poor | As a % of all smallholder poor |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Central | 71,409 | 21.67 | 14.1 |
| Coast | 21,657 | 31.00 | 4.3 |
| Eastern | 124,100 | 35.14 | 24.4 |
| Nyanza | 145,684 | 37.70 | 28.7 |
| Rift Valley | 16,869 | 18.78 | 3.3 |
| Western | 128,073 | 50.30 | 25.2 |
| Total | 507,792 | 34.24 | 100.00 |

Source: Collier and Lal, 1979.

Table 3 shows that the regions of highest smallholder poverty are Nyanza, Western and Eastern provinces. However, looking at *Table 2*, it is in Rift Valley and Central Provinces where there is a higher concentration of landless poor while Western and Nyanza have the lowest figures of landless poor. The discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the dominant cause of poverty differs between regions and

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partly also due to differences in the operation of factors causing landlessness.

Poverty in Central Province is not closely correlated with farm size but rather with the absence of off-farm income. The high off-farm income (50 per cent of total income) has made possible widespread innovation and a high level of inputs per hectare. This has enabled the smallholder to break out of the cash-flow problems. It also enables the undertaking of risky ventures such as switching to a cash crop or improved livestock as a basis for improved income. However, due to the poor becoming net sellers of land, the close correlation between land holding and income might re-emerge.

In Nyanza, poverty is closely correlated with land ownership apparently because innovation has failed to take place. For instance, only 35 per cent of holdings grow hybrid maize compared with 67 per cent in Central Province, whilst improved stock is 5 per cent of total stock compared with 70 per cent in Central Province. The reason why innovation has not occurred is most probably because the off-farm income are very much lower (30 per cent of total income against 50 per cent in Central Province). Non-farm income comprise mainly formal sector wage earnings (largely urban) and remittances (almost exclusively urban) so that innovation is indirectly related to access to urban income opportunities.²¹ Hence, in Nyanza, the proximate cause of poverty is lack of land but the reason for the much higher incidence of poverty in Nyanza than in Central Province (39 per cent against 22 per cent of smallholders being 'poor') is the lack of off-farm income opportunities. Poverty cannot therefore be attributed to landlessness *per se*.

A major constraint in exploring the relationship between poverty and landlessness is the lack of statistics showing the trend in the process of landlessness and indicating whether the problem is worsening. The only time series, which may not be comparable, is landlessness in Central Province. This shows a fall in the proportion of households without land from 23.5 per cent in 1963 to 15.3 per cent in 1976. This is explained by very fast out-migration from Central Province partly to Nairobi but mainly to other rural areas as show in *Table 4*.

Table 4:
Net out-migration from districts of Central Province 1962-69.

| | |
|----------|---------|
| Kiambu | 66,198 |
| Nyeri | 74,252 |
| Meru | 18,483 |
| Murang'a | 131,105 |

Source: Collier and Lal 1979.

Rural Landlessness in the Kenyan Context

Statistics available in Kenya do not allow for an easy national assessment of rural landlessness in terms of numbers. The definitions of key concepts used in the major data surveys such as smallholder household, employment, poverty etc. do not lend the data to interpretations that can neatly separate the rural landless by regions and for Kenya as a whole. In essence, the data is collected on smallholder households. At any rate, a useful line of inquiry is to analyse the process of landlessness by examining the causes of landlessness and possible trends which can instead serve as a good indicator of the nature and extent of the rural landlessness problem.

Land and Population

In an assessment of landlessness, the basic consideration is the relationship between available land resources especially good agricultural land and the size of population. *Table 5* has this information in terms of provincial/district figures on population and high/medium potential land. The high/medium agricultural land constitutes only 19 per cent of Kenya's land area. The provincial land distribution in *Table 5* shows that Rift Valley has a disproportionately high amount of high/medium potential land 32 per cent, compared to Central with only 9 percent. But the density of high/medium potential land is highest for Central while that of Rift Valley is lower than for all the provinces except Eastern.

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Table 5:

Provincial/District figures on Population and High/Medium Potential Land

| Province/ District | Total Area ('000 Km ²) | Population ('000) | % Agricultural Land High/Medium Potential | High/Medium Potential Land | % of Kenya's Population | Density High/Medium Potential Land |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| NAIROBI | 684 | 828 | 30** | 0.2 | 5.4 | — |
| CENTRAL | 13,173 | 2,346 | 96** | 9.3 | 15.3 | 254 |
| Kiambu | 4,924 | 1,335 | 94** | 3.9 | 8.7 | 341 |
| Murang'a | 1,437 | 291 | 100** | 1.1 | 1.9 | 269 |
| Kirinyaga | 3,528 | 233 | 98** | 2.7 | 1.5 | 88 |
| Nyandarua | 3,284 | 487 | 93** | 1.6 | 3.2 | 304 |
| Nyeri | 83,040 | 1,342 | 17* | 11.8 | 8.8 | 115 |
| COAST | 8,257 | 288 | 36* | 2.9 | 1.9 | 100 |
| Kwale | 12,414 | 431 | 29* | 3.5 | 2.8 | 123 |
| Kilifi | 6,506 | 42 | 50* | 3.3 | 0.3 | 13 |
| Lamu | 210 | 341 | 100** | 0.2 | 2.2 | 1,624 |
| Mombasa | 16,959 | 148 | 8** | 0.5 | 1.0 | 285 |
| Taita-Taveta | 38,694 | 92 | 4** | 1.3 | 0.6 | 70 |
| Tana River | 155,759 | 2,720 | 19* | 27.0 | 17.7 | 101 |
| EASTERN | 2,714 | 263 | 100* | 2.5 | 1.7 | 104 |
| Embu | 25,605 | 44 | — | — | 0.3 | — |
| Isiolo | 29,388 | 464 | 53* | 12.1 | 3.0 | 39 |
| Kitui | 14,178 | 1,023 | 66* | 9.0 | 6.7 | 114 |
| Machakos | 73,952 | 96 | — | — | 0.6 | — |
| Marsabit | 9,922 | 830 | 52** | 3.4 | 5.4 | 247 |
| Meru | 126,902 | 374 | — | — | 2.4 | — |
| N/EASTERN | 43,931 | 129 | — | — | 0.8 | — |
| Garissa | 26,470 | 106 | — | — | 0.7 | — |
| Mandera | 56,501 | 139 | — | — | 0.9 | — |
| Wajir | 12,526 | 2,644 | 100** | 12.6 | 17.3 | 211 |
| NYANZA | 2,196 | 869 | 100** | 2.2 | 5.7 | 395 |
| Kisii | 4,615 | 957 | 100** | 4.6 | 6.2 | 208 |
| Kisumu | 5,714 | 818 | 100** | 5.7 | 5.3 | 143 |
| Siaya | 163,884 | 3,240 | 21** | 31.6 | 21.1 | 103 |
| South Nyanza | 9,885 | 204 | 25** | 2.6 | 1.3 | 82 |
| RIFT VALLEY | 2,279 | 149 | 53** | 1.1 | 1.0 | 143 |
| Baringo | 19,605 | 149 | — | — | 1.0 | — |
| Elg/Marakwet | 3,931 | 633 | 100** | 3.8 | 4.1 | 167 |
| Kajiado | 9,718 | 134 | 15** | 1.3 | 0.9 | 103 |
| Kericho | 5,769 | 523 | 59** | 3.3 | 3.4 | 159 |
| Laikipia | 2,745 | 299 | 100** | 2.4 | 2.0 | 128 |
| Nakuru | 16,115 | 210 | 56** | 9.2 | 1.4 | 23 |
| Nandi | 17,521 | 77 | 8** | 1.5 | 0.5 | 55 |
| Narok | 2,078 | 259 | 100** | 2.1 | 1.7 | 125 |
| Samburu | 61,768 | 143 | — | — | 0.9 | — |
| Trans Nzoia | 3,378 | 301 | 100** | 3.3 | 2.0 | 92 |
| Turkana | 9,090 | 159 | 22** | 1.1 | 1.1 | 154 |
| Uasin Gishu | 8,196 | 1,833 | 100** | 7.5 | 12.0 | 247 |
| West Pokot | 3,074 | 504 | 100** | 2.6 | 3.3 | 199 |
| WESTERN | 1,626 | 298 | 100** | 1.7 | 1.9 | 183 |
| Bungoma | 3,495 | 1,031 | 100** | 3.3 | 6.7 | 317 |
| Busia | 564,162 | 15,327 | 18** | 100 | 100 | 154 |
| Kakamega | | | | | | |
| TOTAL KENYA | | | | | | |

Source: ROK, Statistical Abstract 1982, 13, 96.

a/ in persons per square kilometre, small divergencies due to rounding errors.
all or primarily medium potential. **all or primarily high potential.

Definitions

Table 6 on the distribution of small and large smallholdings also shows that it is in Rift Valley and Coast Provinces where there are larger holdings while Central, Nyanza and Western Provinces have smaller holdings. These three latter provinces are also the ones having the highest densities of population as shown in Table 7. This points to land scarcity in relation to the dense population.

Table 6:
Distribution of small and large smallholdings

| Province | Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ hectare % | Less than 1 hectare % | 1-20 hectares % |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Nyanza | 35 | 58 | 4 |
| Western | 28 | 54 | 5 |
| Central | 28 | 47 | 4 |
| Eastern | 18 | 41 | 7 |
| Coast | 12 | 29 | 11 |
| Rift valley | 18 | 29 | 14 |

Source: Statistical Abstract, 1982

Table 7:
Population density in Kenya's provinces (persons per sq. km.)

| Province | 1969 | 1979 |
|---------------|------|------|
| Western | 162 | 223 |
| Nyanza | 169 | 221 |
| Central | 127 | 178 |
| Rift Valley | 15 | 19 |
| Eastern | 12 | 17 |
| Coast | 11 | 16 |
| North-Eastern | 2 | 2 |
| Nairobi | 745 | 1210 |

Source: Republic of Kenya Census, Vol. IV, 14.
Republic of Kenya, Statistical Abstract, 1982.

Rural Landlessness in Kenya

There is also data on changes in the distribution of land holdings amongst smallholders in Central and Nyanza Provinces between 1960 and 1974. The key finding is that concentration in land holdings has increased over time in both regions. Furthermore, the concentration of land is greater than for either income or consumption amongst smallholders in the two regions.²² An important qualification here is that the changes might not be part of a steady continuing process but might be the result of a once-and-for-all event. A case in point is the Africanisation of the White Highlands.

Factors Behind Landlessness

The basic cause of landlessness in Kenya is the scarcity of land which limits access to land. However, given the concern with rural poverty, the fertility of the land may be of critical importance. While poor soil limits the productivity of both large and small farms, it causes particular difficulties for the small-scale farmer who usually has no access to fertilisers and other farm inputs. In brief, the limited amount of good agricultural land Kenya has is the root cause of rural landlessness.

Secondly, those who leave the holdings they farm cannot then return since they cease to have right to the land. This has been the case with migrants who on return find that land has been parcelled out by those who continued to reside on the land. Likewise, squatters who leave the holdings they farm temporarily, due to drought for example, cannot return as they have no right to the land. They will usually find themselves without farming land on return.

Thirdly, privatisation of land has directly caused landlessness through the process of land adjudication and the subsequent establishment of a land market. The market for land has steadily grown from the start of land adjudication and registration in the 1950s. And in areas like Central Province where adjudication started earliest and where cash crops are now grown, one finds that the price of land has soared unabatingly. Some people have consequently been lured by the big cash offers, to sell their land and thereby becoming landless. Some households have also sold land to raise funds to enable them to

pay school fees or repay loans. In addition, given the rising value of land, some people have resorted to court action to dispossess others of land. The end result has been increasing landlessness alongside land concentration. In Nyanza, land sales and court decisions have been identified as the major factors behind land concentration.²³

Also related to the growing market for land is landlessness due to an increase in speculative holdings. The economics of this trend is that as a result of ever rising prices of land, a piece of land bought today can be sold, in say a year's time, at a price well above the interest that the money could earn if it were put in a savings deposit account. It is therefore a lucrative, though agriculturally unproductive investment.

An additional important dimension of speculative holdings is that wealthy individuals have bought large tracts of land, that often were parts of an estate, which they have then subdivided into smaller plots for sale at exorbitant prices. The effect of such practice has been on the one hand to make more land available to those who can afford, (prices paid for the land aside) and on the other hand, the practice has created landlessness and poverty especially among squatters and/or workers of the original estate. The major victims of the practice are mostly found in high population density areas of Kenya particularly Central Province.

Fourthly, the geography of settlement in Kenya has an underlying ethnic rigidity which leaves some of the areas like Western, Nyanza and Central overpopulated while parts of Rift Valley still have an excess of land. This can be observed even at the district level especially where two different ethnic groups occupy neighbouring districts. Historically, it is unacceptable that someone from the central or eastern part of Kenya can move and settle in a rural area in western Kenya and vice versa. As general rule, it is rural to urban migration which has been long distance while rural to rural migration has been of relative short distance to the neighbouring district or province depending of course, on ethnic settlement boundaries.

Fifthly, the rigid pattern of settlement is aggravated by the fact that Kenya has one of the highest population growth rates in the world which is creating landlessness faster than it can be eliminated. Its

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growth rate is currently estimated to be about 4 per cent per annum. At the moment the impact of a fast population growth on land is manifested by the increasing subdivision of even small holdings mainly resulting from land inheritance practices. There are however places like Kiambu where a peasant family on a small hectare cannot be able to provide for its heirs on the same hectare. This is a growing trend in Kenya borne out by the increase of acquisition of land through purchase rather than inheritance. The implication is that increasingly, those who cannot be able to buy land become landless.

In a field survey conducted in Nyanza and Central Provinces in 1982, data collected on how household acquired holdings showed the situation to be as presented in *Table 8*. An interesting contrast is between Kiambu and Siaya in terms of holdings inherited, bought, borrowed, acquired as gift and even those without holdings.

The prevalence of acquisition of land through inheritance indicates that even in Kiambu the majority of the population still own a piece of land at least and that the issue one would like to raise is how much is available for inheritance by the heirs. As already pointed out, if the land is too small heirs become landless. However, there is the possibility of borrowing or getting land as a gift usually within the extended family system. In this case what becomes important is access to a piece of land for subsistence rather than ownership. Another mode of access to land in Kenya is through renting which usually occurs outside the extended family circles. It should be noted that access through plough-sharing or share-cropping are not established practices in the Kenyan context.

Lastly, landlessness results from widowhood and divorce as old social norms are broken. The underlying factor here is the privatisation of land which makes community norms inoperative coupled with a fast growing population making land increasingly scarce.

Rural Landlessness: A Case Study of Kiambu District

In the historical background section, one of the districts identified as having experienced major land alienation during the colonial period is Kiambu. This was the district which consequently became hardest hit

Table 8:
How the Households acquired the Holdings

| Method of Land Acquisition | KIAMBURU | | NYERI | | NYANDARUA | | S. NYANZA | | KISII | | SLAYA | |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds | No. of H/holds | % of H/holds |
| 1 = Inherited | 68 | 61 | 39 | 78 | - | - | 108 | 71 | 132 | 96 | 70 | 96 |
| 2 = Bought Other | 20 | 18 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 16 | 32 | 21 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| a) Borrowed | 8 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 14 | 45 | 3 | 2 | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| b) Govt. land | - | - | - | - | 8 | 26 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| c) Gifted | 3 | 7 | 6 | 12 | - | - | 3 | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| d) Rented | - | - | - | - | 3 | 10 | 6 | 4 | - | - | - | - |
| e) Exchanged | - | - | - | - | 1 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| f) No land | 13 | 12 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Definitions

Source: Alila, P. O. and Riugu, G., "Co-operative Farming in Nandi, S. Nyanza and Nyandarua: FISS Baseline Studies", Nairobi, 1982.

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by the problem of landlessness that continues to clearly manifest itself right into the present third decade of independence. An examination of the problem of landlessness in this district in detail can therefore shed some light on the nature of landlessness in Kenya.

Kiambu District: Background

Kiambu, one of 41 districts of Kenya, and the southern district of the five districts of the Central Province, is bordered by the City of Nairobi and Kajiado District to the South, Machakos Districts to the east, Murang'a District to the north and Nyandarua District to the west.

The district has a high potential land of above 350,370 acres covering about 55 per cent of total land of the district and receiving an average annual rainfall of 1,000 mm. The medium potential area of the district is about 146,518 acres covering about 23 per cent of the total land. There is a low potential area of land comprising some 140,148 acres or about 22 per cent of Kiambu district. There is a part of the total land, about 102,252 acres under planted and natural forest which cover about 126 per cent of the district.²⁵

As of mid-1985, Kiambu District had a total population of about 882,238 of which 794,095 or about 90 per cent is rural, while 88,233 or about 10 per cent is urban. This sets the current population density at about 342 people per square kilometer, as compared to 184 in 1969.²⁶ These densities could however be misleading as some high potential small-scale farming areas have a much higher density of 788 per sq. km. in Thogoto location of Kikuyu Division and of 969 per sq. km. in Ndumberi location of Kiambaa Division. The latter case of Kiambaa is so in spite of the fact that about 37 sq. km. or about 9,143 acres are under large coffee and tea estates. All the same, one should also note that some parts of the district have a low density. These include the dry Karai location of Kikuyu Division. Thika Division has the lowest density, about 122 per sq. km., largely because much of the land is marginal or medium potential.²⁷

Agriculture is the main source of employment and income for the majority of Kenya's rural population and Kiambu is no exception. As

Definitions

already noted, the district has some 350,370 acres of high potential land. Some 148,263 of these are under large-scale agriculture in the ownership of a few individuals and companies and involved in coffee and tea production as well as practicing some dairy and mixed farming. This type of farming employs about 30,000 people, mainly as casual labourers. Otherwise, it is the type of farming that is relatively highly mechanised and thus requiring less labour.²⁸ The rest of the high potential land is shared between the forest area taking about 102,000 acres, and the small-scale farming which occupies about 100,000 acres. The latter constituted the bulk of small-scale farming land in the district, the rest being located in the medium and sometime in the low potentials land.

Kiambu district is generally a predominantly small-scale agricultural area accommodating more than 82,000 small-holdings with an average of nearly 4 acres of high and medium potential land per family. However, the average figure should be viewed with care since about 60,300 households in the district have either no land at all, or have less than 0.25 of an acre only of land.

There are more than 166,000 people employed in agriculture in the small-scale sector, and about 45,000 in the agricultural related activities especially the processing and marketing of agricultural products in the nearby towns, particularly Nairobi. As the (1984-88) Kiambu District Development Plan puts it, agricultural and related production activities engage about 70 per cent of the labour force in the district²⁹. The rest of the population is engaged in trade which occupies about 20,000 people and employment in industry taking more than 35,000 in the towns in and around the district. The analysis leaves us with a large population which may be accounted for in terms of about 441,164 children who are not yet in the labour force and about 175,164 unemployed and underemployed.³⁰

The main cash crops for the small-scale holders are coffee and tea which earn the holders between KShs. 1,000 and 1,500 per family per annum. The income for the labourers in the large-scale coffee and tea estates is estimated at below KShs. 2,400 per annum. Whether small-scale holders or labourers, it is therefore clear that many

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families in Kiambu district live below subsistence level, with a majority of them making every efforts to cultivate some food for home consumption while undertaking some off-farm or non-farm activities to supplement their income.

Landless in Kiambu District

To gain an insight into the problem of landlessness a brief field survey was undertaken in two divisions in Kiambu viz Githunguri and Limuru. The primary data collected and presented below should help in a more precise definition of the kind of people who are landless and how they survive. This can then be extended in the definition of landlessness in Kenya.

The landless in Kiambu District fall in two broad categories: those with no land at all, and those with small pieces of land (0.1-1 acre) that they are unable to subsist on without performing some off-farm or non-farm jobs. As *Table 9* illustrates, about 23 per cent of the respondents are without any land at all while nearly 30 per cent have less than 0.25 of an acre each.

Looking at the composition of the landless households in terms of sex of the household head in *Table 1* is interesting. There are about 38 per cent of the landless household in Kiambu District headed by women, most of whom said they were widowed and had inherited land from their late husbands.

It is therefore understandable that out of 39 respondents who claimed to be completely landless, only 9 were women heads of households while the rest were male head of households. Most of the landless male head of households did not inherit any land from their parents who had been expropriated under the colonial administration. Nearly all the women heads of completely landless households were never married and they therefore found themselves landless on account of having had no husbands from whom they could inherit land. In both cases of landless males and females, the likelihood of their children also growing into yet other landless families is very big indeed. Unless an alternative means of subsistence is found for those families and for their children, or unless land good enough for cultivation is found for them, they face a real danger of living below

subsistence level. This is the group in Kiambu that constitutes about 23 per cent of the landless population

Turning to the households with some land, and beginning with those having less than 0.25 of an acre of land, one finds that the bulk of this group is for all practical purposes landless in the sense that they have only space to fit their dwellings. Nothing is left for these households in form of land for cultivation even for consumption only. It is only in very rare occasions that small households have managed to construct their dwellings and reserve space for some innovative activities such as dairy farming through zero-grazing. Even then, the capital investment demand by such an innovation would mean a substantial off-farm or non-farm income that is not common among the people having less than 0.25 acres of land

Furthermore it can be argued that under certain conditions, for instance, when two or more households are occupying the same piece of land, over 0.50 of an acre of high potential land has proved inadequate in Kiambu district.

In Ndeiya location of Limuru division people with about five acres of land were in three out of four years considered landless. This is because it is an area that is frequently hit by severe drought, rendering the inhabitants incapable of subsisting on their land. This is a very common phenomenon in several parts of the country in the semi-arid and arid areas. It is severely an experience for the several thousands of families who have been allocated even up to 20 acres of land in the ranching areas formerly occupied by the European settlers. Such areas include Naivasha Division of Nakuru District, Kieni Division of Nyeri District, and a large part of Laikipia District. In these areas landlessness cannot be measured in terms of acreage possessed but in terms of the owner's ability to subsist on his land given the harsh ecological and climatic conditions and in the light of great technological and capital constraints that the people in such areas encounter.

Apart from the acreage, ecological, technological and capital constraints that the landless face, one has to address the demographic considerations that have an impact on survival ability. In the first place, it seems that the reproduction rate of the landless is high as

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illustrated in *Table 2, 3 and 4*. It is estimated that 43 per cent of the landless households have a household size of more than seven members. About 58 per cent are also found to have less than four children under the age of 15 (*Table 11*). Moreover, considering that about 53 per cent of the household heads are below the age of 44 (*Table 12*), the likelihood of having more children is very high.

The greater element of the growing landless population, however, seem to be brought about by the fast growing population among the presently landed people. Interviews conducted in Kiambu District indicate that as land pieces become smaller, an average of less than one acre for the District, additional population will mean that many members will have no land. As indicated earlier, this will not be a minor problem as land is considered not merely as an economic means, but of great cultural value.

One question that arises in a study like this is how the landless subsist as well as realize the other basic human wants of food, shelter, clothing and education? If we begin by looking at the kind of expenditure incurred for these needs, it becomes apparent that food takes the greatest share followed by education (*Table 13 & 14*). Generally very little income is spent on shelter or on clothing and leisure. Thus, survival is the first priority of the landless as indeed it is for everybody else, but their efforts are also concentrated on educating off-springs with hope that the latter will escape the plight of their parents and perhaps support them in old-age. This means a double-aimed effort; to improve the future life position of the children and to serve as a form of old-age security for the parents.

In trying to satisfy these priorities, the landless have certain means of realizing their subsistence. The most common means has been to work as labourers in the coffee, tea and pineapple estates in and around the district. This alternative is taken up by most of the people without any land at all. A large number of people with only small pieces of land, however, also get employment in the adjacent large-scale farms and estates, mainly as casual labourers, in a bid to supplement food and incomes from their holdings.

The Kiambu case study indicates that 50 per cent of those who consider themselves landless have undertaken to supplementing their

food and incomes from their casual employment or from their own land pieces by renting or borrowing cultivation land in the nearby and sometimes far off neighbourhoods. Only about 14 per cent of the landless have not sought food or incomes through some form of cultivation of their own. This situation, once again, indicates a desperate attempt by the landless to stay attached to the land by some form of ownership or usage of land for survival. It is a situation that also gives the landless a sense of social security and dignity of belonging, even when the use of land is only temporary. The extent to which this phenomenon is to be found in other parts of the country would be crucial to establish as it may also give some explanation for the slowing down of the rural urban migration as found in the 1984 report on children and women in Kenya.³¹

Government officials in Kiambu District seem to have a good estimate when they suggest that a substantial number of the landless subsist on farming activities. Indeed, a look at their occupations in *Table 16* indicates that some 44 per cent of the landless are employed farm labourers, 17 per cent in government and non-farming private sectors, 10 per cent subsist on cultivation of their own, rented or borrowed land, while 24 per cent derive at least part of their subsistence from self-employment as craftsmen, shopkeepers, market-petty-traders, and the like. In other words, although the level of subsistence may be at the poverty-line, the development of non-agricultural craft and traders predicted by the Swynnerton Plan has contributed an additional, though rarely an exclusive alternative, means of survival for the landless.

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Table 9:
Land Acreage operated by Households:

| Acreage | No. of male house- hold head | No. of female H/hold head | Total | % |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Nil | 30 | 9 | 39 | 23 |
| 0.1 - 0.25 | 29 | 21 | 50 | 30 |
| 0.26 - 0.5 | 18 | 12 | 30 | 18 |
| 0.51 - 0.75 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 0.76 - 1.0 | 15 | 12 | 27 | 16 |
| Over | 10 | 9 | 19 | 11 |
| Total | 104(62%) | 64(38%) | 168 | (100) |

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 10:
*Number of people living in the Households (n = 129)**

| No. of household members | No. of household heads | % |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| 1 - 2 | 10 | 8 |
| 3 - 4 | 20 | 16 |
| 5 - 6 | 27 | 21 |
| 7 - 8 | 32 | 25 |
| 9 - 10 | 15 | 12 |
| 11- 12 | 15 | 12 |
| 13 - 14 | 6 | 5 |
| 15 - 16 | 1 | 1 |
| 17 - 18 | 2 | 2 |
| > 19 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 129 | 100 |

**Landless households only*

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 11:
Children of less than 15 years

| No. of children of < 15 years | No. of households | % |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| 0 | 21 | 13 |
| 1 - 2 | 38 | 23 |
| 3 - 4 | 58 | 35 |
| 5 - 6 | 34 | 20 |
| 7 - 8 | 12 | 7 |
| 9 - 10 | 5 | 3 |
| Over 10 | — | — |
| Total | 168 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 12:
Ages of Household Heads:

| Age | No. of households | % |
|---------|-------------------|-----|
| < 19 | 1 | 1 |
| 20 - 24 | 8 | 5 |
| 25 - 29 | 15 | 9 |
| 30 - 34 | 18 | 11 |
| 35 - 39 | 19 | 11 |
| 40 - 44 | 28 | 17 |
| 45 - 49 | 27 | 16 |
| 50 - 54 | 17 | 10 |
| 55 - 59 | 10 | 6 |
| 60 - 64 | 8 | 5 |
| 65 - 69 | 4 | 2 |
| 70 + | 13 | 8 |
| Total | 168 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 13:
Households' Annual spending on Food (n = 129)

| Annual spending (KShs.) | No. of household heads | % |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Does not know | 2 | 2 |
| 1 - 500 | 8 | 6 |
| 501 - 1000 | 11 | 9 |
| 1001 - 1500 | 12 | 9 |
| 1501 - 2000 | 11 | 9 |
| 2001 - 2500 | 5 | 4 |
| 2501 - 3000 | 11 | 9 |
| 3001 - 3500 | — | — |
| 3501 - 4000 | 15 | 12 |
| 4001 - 4500 | 4 | 3 |
| 4501 - 5000 | 12 | 9 |
| 5001 - 5500 | 3 | 2 |
| over 5500 | 35 | 27 |
| Total | 129 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 14 :
Households' Annual spending on Education (n = 129)

| Spending (KShs.) | No of household heads | % |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----|
| Nil | 30 | 23 |
| 1 - 500 | 22 | 17 |
| 501 - 1000 | 28 | 22 |
| 1001 - 1500 | 12 | 9 |
| 1501 - 2000 | 9 | 7 |
| 2001 - 2500 | 4 | 3 |
| 2501 - 3000 | 5 | 4 |
| 3001 - 3501 | - | - |
| 3501 - 4000 | 3 | 2 |
| 4001 - 4500 | 3 | 2 |
| 4501 - 5000 | 2 | 2 |
| 5001 - 5500 | 4 | 3 |
| Over 5500 | 8 | 6 |
| Total | 129 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985.

Table 15:
Land Size and Sex of Household Head

| ACREAGE: | 0.1-0.25 | | 0.26-0.6 | | 0.6-1.0 | | 0.6-1.0 | | 1.1-1.5 | | 1.8-2.0 | | Over 2 | | Total | |
|-----------------------|----------|----|----------|----|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|--------|---|-------|----|
| Sex of household head | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| NA | 26 | 19 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 19 | — |
| 1 = Owned | — | — | 18 | 5 | 3 | — | 2 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 2 | — | 25 | 6 |
| 2 = Rented | — | — | 7 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 12 | 3 | 5 | 3 | — | 3 | 1 | 2 | 34 | 23 |
| 3 = Borrowed | — | — | 4 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 13 | 14 |
| 4 = Plough-shared | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 5 = Share-cropped | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| 6 = Owned & rented | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | 3 | — |
| 7 = Owned & borrowed | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| 8 = Rented & borrowed | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 26 | 19 | 29 | 21 | 20 | 7 | 19 | 8 | 6 | 4 | — | 3 | 4 | 2 | 104 | 64 |

Definitions

Source: Field Survey Data, 1985

Status of the Landless

Table 16:
Main Occupation of Household Heads: (n = 165)

| Occupation | No of H/hold heads | % |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----|
| . = Unemployed | 8 | 5 |
| 1 = Craftsman | 14 | 8 |
| 2 = Shopkeepers | 3 | 2 |
| 3 = Market Traders | 23 | 14 |
| 4 = Government Employees | 8 | 5 |
| 5 = Private Sector Employees | 20 | 12 |
| 6 = Farm labourers | 73 | 44 |
| 7 = Peasant Farmers | 17 | 10 |
| Total | 166 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey Data 1985

CHAPTER III

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON RURAL LANDLESSNESS 1963 - 1985

Introduction

The land reforms initiated by the colonial administration and carried by the post-colonial state had three objectives. First, there was need to contain political dissent, which the Mau Mau movement represented in the most sophisticated and developed form. Secondly, there was need for legal changes in relation to land ownership, that is moving from customary land tenure to private (capitalist) ownership of land, with the resultant issue of title deeds on registered and consolidated land. Thirdly, there was the objective of expanding cash crop production among the Africans who in the early stages of colonial development were left out by settler interests.

It is however, necessary to see what was happening in the agrarian sector in the wider context of transition from colonial to post-colonial economy, with change in political system, the commercial sector, and the labour market — especially efforts to stabilise the working class. The declared aim of these reforms was to encourage the emergence of a strong African class with strong interests in the rural sector (land) commerce (urban labour) and political stability (state). What these policies were intended to safeguard was the continuity of capitalist development in independent Kenya.³² As far as land policy is concerned, this continuity is ensured through various government policies, before and after independence. By 1970 the radical nationalists who challenged this land policy were contained and state land policies carried throughout the country without any serious organised challenge.³³

Agrarian Land Policies

Twenty years of agrarian land reform (1954-1974) formed the cornerstone of the transition from colonial to independent Kenya economy. These policies were the hallmark of Kenyatta's government. The policies involved changes in land tenure in the

former African land units and the Africanisation of the former White Highlands. Essentially these policies were intended to deal with land scarcity and thereby diffuse political instability which land alienation in the early stages of colonisation had provoked.

The crucial factor in land reform in the former African 'reserves' was land consolidation and registration.³⁴ This was closely followed by increased attention given to commodity production, provision of agricultural credit and extension services. Land consolidation was a reform which the nascent rural capitalist class in districts like Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Embu and Kakamega had clamoured for in the thirties and forties, but which was not instituted by the colonial state because of entrenched settler interests and much more because of fear of political consequences from a landless class which inevitably could emerge from such measures.

However, the declaration of the state of emergency in Central Kenya, resulting in the detention of most leaders in the districts of Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Embu and Meru provided the colonial administration with a unique opportunity for carrying out land consolidation and registration with minimal resistance. The forced removal of the rural population from scattered villages and their concentration in 'protected' villages provided opportunities for these land policies to be carried through.

After these measures were carried out, the landless were left in the former 'protected' villages while the peasants with more than three acres were allowed back on their private owned land. In most of the districts of Central Province, these were implemented by the time of independence, something which the independent government legitimised and followed in other parts of rural Kenya. Data from a case study of Kiambu District illustrate the consequences of these policies to the emergence of landlessness in the late fifties and in the early sixties. In Meru and Embu districts, these policies started earliest in 1960 and were completed in the mid-sixties. Elsewhere the programmes started later and the pace has been slower.

In Baringo and Nandi districts, for instance, the reforms started in 1959 and continued in the 1970's. In other districts in the Rift Valley Province — Elgeyo-Marakwet, Kajiado, Kericho — land

consolidation and registration started after independence and has continued in the last two decades. In Western Province (Kakamega, Bungoma and Busia) the process started in 1963 and was completed in the mid-seventies. In Nyanza Province (Kisumu, Siaya, South Nyanza and Kisii districts) the implementation of these policies started in 1965 and are continuing to date.

While these initial measures have had the consequences of accelerating commodity production, increased access to extension services and above all the penetration of domestic and international capital, they have had tremendous impact of differentiation of the peasantry — particularly the emergence of a nascent class of landless peasants who survive mainly by selling their labour power to the middle and rich peasants. Although the accumulation of land into the hands of a few 'progressive' farmers has not occurred as anticipated in the Swynnerton Plan there are other outcomes of these policies which are observable in the countryside and which lead to continued emergence of landlessness. These are fragmentation of holdings through inheritance and rapid increase in farm incomes coupled with rapid population growth. The main consequence of these developments has been out migration to other areas where land is available — through land resettlement schemes, land buying co-operatives or outright individual transfer of land to other individuals.

As indicated the government policies in this field have been reinforced by penetration of capital for production of commodities like tea, coffee, milk and sugar. Through various state sponsored institutions the production of these commodities is supervised and controlled by the state, thereby reinforcing the impact of land policies that the government has instituted in the last twenty-five years.

While these policies have mainly benefited the middle and rich peasants, the poor peasants and landless have also been affected. The poor peasants although mainly in household subsistence agriculture, find they can augment their income through selling their labour (sometimes seasonally) to the peasants involved in production of tea, coffee and sugar. The landless on the other hand, provide most of the

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rural labour force — which in low labour requirement season is mainly unemployed.

During the 1984 drought, most of Central Kenya found it had to depend on food relief supplies for survival, something which is not often appreciated because of the assumed high overall levels of incomes of the districts in this region.³⁵ As a result of population growth and pressure on land that results therefrom, the land and incomes which these two groups had access to is declining considerably at a time also when opportunities for migration outside these areas are becoming extremely limited. The land frontier within and outside each locality is no longer available and the population most hard hit is the rural landless, especially those who are unemployed.

The former White Highlands in the sixties and early seventies provided land frontier for easing landlessness and land pressure in the areas of Central and Western Kenya. By 1970 about two million acres out of the total 7.5 million acres were transferred to Africans through land settlement schemes and thereby settling about half-a-million people in the Highlands. While the political goal of warding off political violence associated with the land question was achieved, this transfer only affected a small proportion of the land available in the highlands. Other forms of transfer effected were through large-scale individual ownership, land buying companies and co-operatives, a feature that became common in the late seventies and early eighties.³⁶

The long term implication of these policies were integration of the former African land units with the white highlands. Land settlement schemes (a million-acre-scheme, Haraka etc.) formed an important bridge in this process, while at the same time alleviating land pressure in some parts of Kenya. The formation of new districts like Nyandarua, (Central) Uasin-Gishu, Trans Nzoia, Laikipia, and Nakuru (Rift Valley) was the consequence of these state land policies. In addition there were other smaller sections of the former white highlands which were integrated through settlement schemes to other rural districts of Central and Rift Valley Provinces. While political considerations were paramount in these policies, they did provide an

important venue for dealing with economic specifically employment problems related to landlessness and rural poverty.

Agricultural Modernisation

The major changes in Kenya's agriculture in the post-independence period include first the transfer of large farm holdings to small-scale producers; land that was previously fallow or used for grazing was thus put into production. The major consequence of these actions was that between 1960s and early 1970s cropped land expanded by 20 per cent. Secondly, previously restricted activities, notably coffee, tea and dairy production, were opened to African producers on a larger scale. Thirdly, the introduction and rapid uptake of hybrid maize in the late 1960s significantly increased production among both commercial and subsistence producers.³⁷

The lack of relevance of these changes for the poor rural landless is indicated by the policy objectives behind the changes which obviously did not encompass this particular group among the intended beneficiaries. The first policy objective was the Africanisation of the economy following political independence. This meant simply, well-placed Africans taking over European farming role in the economy. Secondly, increased export cash crop production to ensure the flow of foreign exchange is the policy objective which became and continues to be the major driving force of practically all agricultural sector activities. It is also important to remember that agriculture only gained increasing importance in the 1970s. The focus of planning immediately after independence was on industrialisation. The emphasis all along has therefore been on production in the modern sector whether it was for industry or agriculture.³⁸

It is the Fourth Development Plan (1979-83) which was unique in the emphasis it placed on poverty alleviation and the provision of basic needs, i.e. the provision of income earning opportunities to target groups whose income earnings are below the national average. Thus emphasis on agricultural development is evident. The broad objectives of the Plan for agricultural development were the

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following:

- (i) encouraging overall sector;
- (ii) improving the balance of payments by meeting national food needs and expanding exports;
- (iii) increasing employment opportunities;
- (iv) raising rural incomes;
- (v) conserving natural resources.

There were a clear emphasis in the Plan on smallholder development and the necessary incentives and services to bring it about. It recommended the improvement of the incentive structure for producers with regard to marketing of their produce and prices paid. It envisaged an expansion of services for the sector including research, agricultural education, extension, livestock services and agricultural credit. Specifically, research would focus on encouraging intensive land use, development of arid and semi-arid lands, smallholder production technology, labour intensive production methods and export promotion.

It is also the Fourth Plan that made a recommendation for the National Food Policy which was drafted in 1980 following shortages of maize and other basic food commodities after the 1979 and 1980 droughts.³⁹ The overall objectives of food policy include:

- a) maintaining a position of broad self-sufficiency in primary food commodities to avoid using scarce foreign exchange for food imports;
- b) achieving a calculated degree of food supply security for each region of the country;
- c) ensuring that food distribution provides every member of the population with a nutritionally adequate diet.

A point of similarity between the Food Policy Paper and the Fourth Plan was in terms of programs for realising the objectives. In brief, these included giving priority to public investment in agriculture, and especially to subsistence food crops; improving efficiency of production, marketing and distributions; developing a well-defined land policy; and increasing national storage capacity.

However, as it often happens, formal stated policies are not always the practical guide for government action. There has consequently

been a divergence between stated government intentions and actions in agricultural modernisation programs pointing to the fact that there has been no marked change in agricultural development policy following the above policy pronouncements. An indication of this is first, that although the Plan and the Food Policy Paper put emphasis on increased public investments in the agricultural sector, the actual share of government development expenditures in agriculture remained virtually the same since fiscal year (FY) 1979 and fell from previous years. In FY75, agriculture received 22.1 per cent of the Development Budget; by FY82, this had fallen to 17.6 per cent.⁴⁰

The patterns of allocations within the agricultural sector itself also reveal a difference between policy statements and action. While the official policy statements put emphasis on smallholder programs, a large percentage of the agriculture budget has gone to parastatals with only limited benefit to smallholders. The two sets of projects allocated most funds were irrigation (through National Irrigation Board) and sugar development, including factory construction and rehabilitation.⁴¹

Secondly, although research has significantly contributed to agricultural development in Kenya, notably through the development of hybrid maize and outstanding work on coffee and tea, the focus has been on research related to cash crop and commercial production. The research system has not been generating technologies and information in key areas for future development, especially smallholder production and food crops. The allocation of resources among research programs also reflects this commercial orientation. Coffee and tea receive the largest proportion, 26.7 per cent and 5.1 per cent respectively. Livestock and range research receives about 23 per cent, while maize receives 8 per cent and other food crops 16 per cent.⁴²

The orientation towards cash crops and commercial production prevails in the areas of credit, extension and co-operatives. The principle of revolving fund underlying the credit system has meant that farmers obtaining credit must grow a cash crop which serves as proof of the ability to repay the loan. The priority of those taking

advantage of the credit facilities have consequently been those farming for profit who can therefore pay back the loan and not those farming for subsistence. It is also the case with regard to extension that those labelled progressive farmers have been the target group of extension staff in terms of farmer contact and their dissemination of information.⁴³ These progressive farmers, especially those growing cash crops, are the ones who have benefited most from agricultural co-operatives which historically have been formed to market cash crops.⁴⁴ It can be said that generally the institutions for credit, extension and co-operatives have been geared to serving progressive farmers mainly in high potential areas of Kenya. The rural poor have been excluded from the benefits and studies have shown that women in particular have been disadvantaged.⁴⁵

Settlement

Settlement programmes in Kenya originated in the last years of the colonial period. The initial settlements for Africans in the former White Highlands involved private initiative by some European farmers who allocated their land to Africans. Such allocations mainly catered for the squatters and labourers on those farms.

The majority of Europeans, however, were adamant on the issue of giving land for the settlement of Africans. They insisted on getting a market price for their farms before. In 1960, the colonial government in conjunction with the Kenya National Farmers Union managed to get an acceptable solution by way of securing funds from the British Government, the World Bank and the West German Government for the purpose of buying off the European farmers for the purpose of settling Africans. This solution crystalized as the Million Acre Settlement Programme under which some 34,000 families would be settled. The scheme was designed in such a way as to promote three main types of schemes: Low Density Schemes (later on called Harambee Settlement Schemes), Medium Density Schemes, and High Density Schemes.⁴⁶

Low Density Schemes were established to cater for the wealthier Africans with extensive farming experience and/or finance that would

enable them to productively utilize the new land. This type of settlement did not accommodate the landless. It involves large pieces of land, ordinarily catering for those people who sought to extend their farming business or who joined farming as an additional means of making profit. It was not concerned with provision of means of subsistence for the poor.

The second type of settlement scheme was the Medium Density Schemes. These catered for farmers and/or people with extra finance and sought to expand their incomes by farming in the former European areas. These people obtained smaller pieces of land, but one that would enable them to yet raise their incomes over and above what they then earned.

The third main type of settlement scheme has been the High Density Settlement involving allocation of small pieces of land of up to 12 acres per family. These were mainly utilised to maintain the families at subsistence level. This particular type of scheme attracted a large number of people who were landless but many more of those whose land holdings in the traditional areas had become too small and effectively diminishing in capacity to provide subsistence. Many of these people hailed from Central Province where landlessness was undoubtedly most acute and on the increase.

The provisions of the "Million Acre" Programme did not prevent the emergence of other schemes. These include *Haraka*, and *Shirika* schemes under which the settlers received about 2.5 acres for building and subsistence food production, while the rest of the farm was operated on a large-scale basis and a manager provided by the government through the Department of Settlement.⁴⁷

Since 1967, however, big farm-buying companies and co-operatives have emerged. In these organisations members pool financial resources together to buy large-scale farms after which the farms are subdivided into small pieces averaging about seven acres. This form of settlement schemes has now become predominant in Kenya with the effect that it has rendered land all the more sensitive an issue it has always been.

It should also be recalled at this juncture that much of the good land had overtime been transferred intact as large-scale farms to prominent

politicians, civil servants and businessmen. This meant that little good land was left for the subsequent settlement schemes. Therefore, most of the later schemes have had to be established on less fertile land.⁴⁸ In fact, as competition for good land became intense after independence, the settlement schemes became more and more marginalized and quite often falling on very poor and dry land. Thus, although the Africans settled afterwards received land, the socio-economic condition of many of them changed little particularly in terms of being able to subsist on the land. Like others having similar socio-economic status in the traditional farming areas, many of these new settlers have to spend a lot of their productive time in either non-farm or off-farm casual employment. This is what is happening to the people of Ndeiya, Munyu and Ruiru Settlement Schemes in Kiambu District, or with Mai-Mahiu Scheme of Naivasha in Nakuru District, Kieni Schemes of Nyeri District, and several schemes under farm-buying co-operatives and companies in Laikipia District. Many times the off-farm jobs to be done by the settlers are seasonal thus rendering a large number of them unemployed or underemployed most of the year.

Irrigation

The importance of development of irrigated agriculture in Kenya derives from the fact that of the total land area, about 80 per cent is dry land. But although the total irrigation potential covers about 540,000 hectares, very little has so far been developed — only about one-fifth by the end of 1982.

The planning and implementation of irrigation and drainage projects is done through institutions falling under the Ministry of Agriculture. There is, first, the Irrigation and Drainage Branch of the ministry which deals with small-scale schemes. These small-scale irrigation schemes are of two categories viz. minor or arid regions irrigation schemes and the small-scale or high, medium rainfall irrigation schemes.

The minor irrigation schemes have been developed in arid areas of Kenya in localities where large rivers flow. These areas are traditionally inhabited by pastoralists who derive their livelihood

from livestock. However, due to the combined effect of overgrazing and drought, there is a constant threat of famine and starvation. As matter of fact, most of the people can only survive on famine relief food rations provided by the government and other charitable organisations. The government has therefore since independence promoted and encouraged food production through the minor irrigation schemes providing food-for-work for the settlers until they can raise their own crops.

The small-scale irrigation schemes are operated mainly by groups but also by individuals. Since 1977, the Small Scale Irrigation Unit of the Ministry has assisted farmers in project formulation including soil survey, design, and implementation in the initial stages of these projects. There is emphasis on food production but there is also production of horticultural crops for the market. The land tenure status in the case of lower Tana small-scale irrigation projects is that land is set aside by the village community for irrigation and individuals are allocated plots which they work. But they do not have ownership rights. In other schemes there is recognition of traditional rights after an individual has worked the land over the years. As in the case of minor irrigation schemes small-scale schemes, also get food from government through famine relief and/or food-for-work programmes.⁴⁹

The second major irrigation institution in the ministry is a parastatal, the National Irrigation Board (NIB), which deals with large-scale irrigation projects. It however needs to be borne in mind that there were large-scale schemes prior to independence including Mwea-Tebere, Perkerra and Hola. These schemes which were set up during the emergency in the 1950s utilised free labour provided by the Mau Mau detainees. As the NIB operations have expanded additional schemes have been established namely, Ahero, Bunyala, West Kano and Bura.

The NIB-operated schemes are therefore currently seven in total of which Mwea and Bura are the biggest. Bura was originally the most ambitious project having been planned to comprise 6,700 ha. of land and 4,500 ha. of forest, all under irrigation. It was however scaled

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down due to escalating costs together with a shortage of finances. The current plant is for 3,900 ha. for farming, 2,500 ha. forest and 3,000 tenant families.⁵⁰

Table 17:

Large-scale Irrigation Schemes — 1982/83

| Scheme | Irrigated area (ha) | No. of tenants tenants | Main crop production | Value of production |
|-----------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Mwea | 5,784 | 3,151 | Rice | |
| Hola | 782 | 605 | Cotton | |
| Perkerra | 183 | 342 | Onion/Chillies | |
| Ahero | 1,103 | 519 | Rice/Sugarcane | |
| Bunyala | 213 | 131 | Rice | |
| West Kano | 1,095 | 961 | Rice/Sugarcane | |
| Bura | 740 | 814 | Cotton | |
| TOTAL | 9,900 | 6,523 | | |

Source: ROK — Statistical Abstract, 1984.

As established by the Irrigation Act of 1966, and charged with the responsibility for the development, control and improvement of national irrigation schemes, the NIB functions and powers show no concern for the landless. These include to:

- conduct research and investigations into establishment of irrigation schemes.
- raise funds for the development of schemes.
- coordinate and plan settlement.
- determine the number of settlers to be accommodated in a scheme.
- promote the marketing of crops grown on the schemes.
- provide for processing of produce grown on the schemes.
- award bursaries or scholarships for the study of irrigation.
- make regulations for the day-to-day running and administration of the schemes.⁵¹

In terms of actual operations it is significant to remember that the NIB irrigation development programme has been shaped by its status as a parastatal body. It enjoys certain advantages of a government

organisation, for example, the use of the services of government departments. At the same time, it is relatively free of a number of constraints of civil service administrative procedures. Thus, when it comes to justification of its existence, it cannot be entirely on the grounds of providing a public service — it has to show profit returns for its ventures.

The NIB irrigation ventures have therefore concentrated on cash crops including rice, cotton, onions, sugarcane and capsicum/chillies. Those settled to work the irrigation fields have been designated tenants who have no ownership rights to the plots they are assigned. As a matter of fact, the NIB has legal rights for eviction of tenants who fail to comply with irrigation rules. The tenants adherence to irrigation rules is actually of greater concern than his/her socio-economic status.

It is only in the case of Bura that there has been concern about the landless and unemployed in line with the project objectives but only at the recruitment stage. The main objectives of the project can be summarised as:

- (a) to settle unemployed, underemployed and landless, rural families who otherwise drift to the towns and aggravate urban problems, particularly unemployment;
- (b) to increase agricultural production and thereby reduce imports of cotton and food crops, and to thus save foreign exchange;
- (c) to stimulate regional development;
- (d) to reclaim semi-arid land which previously had been bush and scrubland.

It needs to be pointed out that due to the other consideration such as quotas for provinces and higher production, a large number of those actually settled in Bura are not landless persons.⁵² The striking feature regarding the composition of tenants is that the majority group settled are coastal peoples who are also the leading group on the waiting list. It is worth noting in this connection that the broad pattern in the NIB schemes is that a disproportionately large number of tenants come from the surrounding areas. Bura is therefore exceptional in having a substantial number of tenants coming from far off parts of Kenya

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although quite a number of them also left the scheme due to the difficult conditions in Bura. Thus in NIB schemes and even in Bura, the problem of landlessness is not being directly addressed. In fact, there is already within the older schemes, particularly Mwea, an imminent crisis of landlessness amongst children of tenants.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RURAL LANDLESS**Introduction**

The socio-economic status of the rural landless is basically a reflection of the fact that the majority belong to a larger social group of the poor. Thus, as individuals and as a group, it is poverty which limits access by most of the rural landless even to basic necessities of life. There are clear indications from the dynamics of their situation that poor access to the means to satisfy basic and other socio-economic needs is in fact a root cause of absolute and relative poverty which is rampant amongst the rural landless.

The location of the rural landless in the rural areas is also a major consideration in a discussion of the nature of access to basic needs specifically because, in comparison to the urban areas, the rural areas are less endowed. There are limited opportunities for employment and poor quality as well as inadequate supply of social amenities which constrain the rural landless and other rural dwellers from satisfying their socio-economic needs. In other words, the socio-economic status of the rural landless in part derives from their location in the rural areas.

Employment Opportunities and Earnings

The major problem in trying to give a precise description of the employment situation in Kenya is the fact that 85 per cent of the total population lives in the rural areas, and the majority of the rural population is not wage-earning. Rather, they depend upon land and livestock for a living, and occasionally enter the cash economy with farm produce and goods.⁵³ This makes self-employed persons an important category, apart from wage-earners, yet there is a dearth of statistics on this kind of employment.

Kenya's wage-earners are mostly employed by the "modern sector" of the economy — urban business, large-scale farms and large-scale enterprises in the rural areas. Central and local governments, parastatals and other public sector establishments

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employ another large segment. In addition, outside the "modern sector", small farms and small-scale rural enterprises offer wage employment but payment may not always be in the form of regular wages or salaries.

Table 18.

Total wage employment in the economy 1980-1983

| | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 000's | 000's | 000's | 000's |
| Private Agriculture and Forestry | 172.5 | 173.7 | 167.5 | 177.3 |
| Rest of Private Sector | 361.8 | 366.5 | 372.9 | 388.2 |
| Public Service | 471.5 | 484.1 | 505.6 | 527.8 |
| Total | 1,005.8 | 1,024.3 | 1,046.0 | 1,093.3 |

Source: Kenya Statistical Abstract 1984.

Table 18 shows that the total wage employment of 1,005,800 in 1980 rose to 1,093,300 in 1983. This shows an increase of only 8.6 per cent in wage-paid labour jobs between 1980 and 1983. The increase was marginal in 1984 by a meagre 2 per cent or 22,000 new jobs.⁵⁴ The increase, it should be noted, was mainly due to jobs created in the public service which increasingly offered more employment during this period. A much more basic concern however is that in 1983 the labour force was estimated at seven million meaning that those in wage employment constituted less than 15 per cent of the total labour force.⁵⁵

A consideration of wage employment by industry reveals that agriculture is the leading industry compared to manufacturing. In 1983, agriculture employed 21 per cent of those in wage employment while 14 per cent were employed in manufacturing.⁵⁶

It is estimated overall that agriculture employs 75 per cent of the total labour force while over 95 per cent of the total Kenyan population are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Thus agriculture is the dominant industry in the Kenyan economy in terms of employment and earnings. *Table 19* showing the main occupation of heads of smallholding households is a useful pointer to this pattern.

Table 19:
Main occupation of Heads of Smallholding Households by Province

| | Coast % | Central % | Eastern % | Rift Valley % | Nyanza % | Western % | Kenya % |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing | 73.7 | 55.8 | 67.6 | 72.3 | 79.1 | 80.7 | 71.4 |
| Scientific, Technical and Administrative Services | 7.1 | 6.2 | 8.0 | 7.5 | 6.8 | 3.0 | 6.6 |
| Production, Manufacturing | 6.3 | 9.9 | 9.7 | 7.8 | 2.5 | 3.4 | 6.5 |
| General Labourer | 4.3 | 5.3 | 6.7 | 4.2 | 4.1 | 3.1 | 4.7 |
| Transport | 1.0 | 10.8 | 2.9 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 4.5 |
| Armed Forces | 2.4 | 5.2 | 1.0 | 2.5 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 2.4 |
| No occupation | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| | 5.2 | 6.5 | 3.5 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 4.2 | 3.8 |

Source: ROK Integrated Rural Surveys Basic Report 1976-1979, 45-49 (IRS 4, 1978/79).

Table 19 also provides an indication of the greater dependence on agriculture in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas where most of the manufacturing businesses are located. This is clearly brought out by sources of smallholder income in Table 20. The smallholding sector is numerically dominant given the estimated total smallholder population of 13.8 million in 1978-79. This constitutes over 80 per cent of Kenya's total population.⁵⁷ This sector is also economically significant in view of the fact that smallholdings account for about three-fourths of the total agricultural output, and two-thirds of the land areas devoted to arable agriculture.

Table 20: Sources of Smallholder Income by Province

| Source | Coast % | Central % | Eastern % | Rift Valley % | Nyanza % | Western % | Kenya % |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Farm Operating Surplus | 52 | 27 | 56 | 74 | 70 | 51 | 59 |
| Non-Farm Operating Surplus | 7 | 18 | 14 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 9 |
| Regular Employment | 21 | 13 | 10 | 10 | 16 | 21 | 15 |
| Casual Employment | 8 | 14 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| Remittances from Relatives | 9 | 24 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 15 | 8 |
| Other Gifts | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Source: Social Perspectives: Non-Farm Activities in Rural Kenya Household, 2:2.

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Furthermore smallholdings account for over 85 per cent of total agricultural employment, and about 70 per cent of total employment in the economy.⁵⁸ The data on smallholder households is therefore a good pointer to the situation of the rural landless.

However, in terms of earnings those employed in manufacturing establishments generally earn more than those engaged in agricultural employment. *Table 21* shows that this is the case in both the private and public sector.

Table 21:
Average wage earnings per employee, 1981-1984.

| Sector | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | K£ 1984 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|---------|------------|
| PRIVATE SECTOR | | | | |
| Agriculture and Forestry | 237.9 | 248.2 | 267.8 | 299.4 |
| Manufacturing | 834.5 | 943.4 | 1,032.7 | 1,110.7 |
| PUBLIC SECTOR | | | | |
| Agriculture and Forestry | 435.6 | 459.4 | 507.0 | 524.2 |
| Manufacturing | 837.7 | 867.3 | 978.8 | 1,069.3 |

Source: Economic Survey 1985 p. 50.

It is significant to add that the average real earnings increased by only 0.7 per cent in 1984 as the inflation rate fell to 9.1 per cent compared to 14.6 per cent in 1983 and the all-time high of 22.3 per cent in 1982. The average wage earner's purchasing power was thus just barely sustained in 1983-84 period.⁵⁹ It can therefore be argued that the situation of non wage-earners considerably worsened relative to wage-earners.

There is no data available specifically on wages of rural landless labour by regions and by seasons. However, an impression on levels of wages of the rural landless and how wages of those in permanent employment compare with those in casual employment can be gained from *Table 22*.

Table 22:
Estimates of rural employment incomes for adult males in the rural areas during 1969 (KShs./month)

| Province | Modern Sector Employment | | | Small Farm & Settlement Schemes Employment | | | Average Rural Wage Income |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|-------|--|--------|-------|---------------------------|
| | Agriculture | Other | Total | Regular | Casual | Total | |
| Nyanza | 139 | 242 | 219 | 53 | 71 | 61 | 124 |
| Western | 88 | 400 | 350 | 66 | 66 | 66 | 159 |
| Rift Valley | 107 | 364 | 177 | 58 | 42 | 52 | 159 |
| Central | 114 | 371 | 232 | 106 | 66 | 90 | 197 |
| Eastern | 150 | 314 | 270 | 67 | 83 | 72 | 224 |
| Coast | 188 | 319 | 262 | 73 | 74 | 74 | 125 |
| Total | 117 | 338 | 219 | 68 | 69 | 68 | 161 |

Source: H. Rempel, *Rural-Urban Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment in Kenya*, Laxenburg, Austria, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, 1981.

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Wage levels on small farms and in settlement schemes are somewhat lower than modern sector agricultural wages, which are well below non-agricultural modern sector wage levels.⁶⁰ The estimated real average wage earnings in 1984 in the private sector agriculture was about K£99 and manufacturing was K£367 while in the public sector agriculture was K£173 and K£353 for manufacturing.⁶¹ It was estimated in 1983 that agricultural wages averaged one-third of all private sector and slightly over one-fourth of all public sector wages. This makes agriculture the most poorly paid of any occupational category.⁶²

Table 23:

Sources of rural smallholding family income, 1974-75

| Farm Operating Surplus | Non-Farm Operating Surplus | Regular Employment | Casual Employment | Remittance/ Gifts |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 59% | 9% | 15% | 7% | 10% |

Source: CBS, Social Perspectives, 2:2, 6 Based on IRS 1

Non-Farm Activities

Table 23 shows that rural families obtain income from both farm and non-farm sources.

The diversity of economic activity off the holding (off-farm employment) is an outstanding feature of smallholder livelihood. The portion of the income of smallholding families which comes from sources other than their agricultural production is a substantial 41 per cent. Off-farm activities of family members residing on the holding account for 30 per cent and the remainder comes from urban remittances and gifts.⁶³

Table 24 shows the various types of non-farm activity giving percentage distribution of rural households among these activities. Manufacturing of food and tobacco products was the most prevalent activity. But the major non-farm activity in Coast, Eastern and Central provinces was the provision of services.⁶⁴

Table 24:
Percentage distribution of rural households, by type of non-farm activity, by province

| | Coast | Eastern | Central | Rift Valley | Nyanza | Western | National Total |
|--|-------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|---------|----------------|
| Manufacturing of food and tobacco products | 24.2 | 18.3 | 5.9 | 20.5 | 36.5 | 25.1 | 22.3 |
| Services | 25.0 | 26.2 | 14.3 | 10.9 | 14.7 | 21.4 | 17.8 |
| Manufacture of wood products | 6.4 | 17.0 | 11.8 | 11.2 | 16.9 | 14.0 | 14.0 |
| Manufacture of plant and animal fibre | | | | | | | |
| products & wearing apparel | 21.0 | 19.6 | 4.2 | 13.2 | 12.2 | 6.8 | 12.4 |
| Resource extraction | 9.7 | 14.5 | 2.5 | 10.0 | 17.5 | 14.0 | 12.1 |
| Wholesale and retail trading | 6.4 | 8.0 | 7.3 | 5.9 | 13.7 | 12.1 | 9.3 |
| Repairing | 3.2 | 8.2 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 8.9 | 6.2 | 5.4 |
| Construction | 2.4 | 9.5 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 6.8 | 4.6 | 4.7 |
| Pottery products | 0.8 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 5.4 | 0.9 | 1.7 |
| Manufacture of metal products | 0.8 | 1.0 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 1.6 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Total = 100% | 100.0 | | | | | | |

Status of the Landless

Source: ROK, *Integrated Rural Surveys Basic Report 1976-1979, 1981*, p. 78

There is further evidence showing that at the national level, more than 50 per cent of the households were engaged in at least one non-farm activity and almost 25 per cent in two or more. In Central province where the largest proportion of households were not engaged in such activities, this is probably a reflection of greater opportunities for formal employment.

In regard specifically to the poor rural landless, a useful indication of the importance of off-farm income for livelihood is the fact that low-income smallholders (about 40 per cent of the total) are heavily dependent on off-farm income. The low income smallholders function primarily as sources of labour for wealthier smallholders, commercial farms and informal enterprises. Likewise, the poor rural landless serve as sources of such labour.⁶⁵ However, while farming provides a marginal livelihood for low-income smallholders, the poor rural landless lack such opportunities by virtue of non-ownership of land. The latter are thus even more heavily dependent on off-farm income.

In any case off-farm income earning opportunities have been of great significance especially to the rural landless because they have contributed to the holding power of the rural areas in the face of extreme pressure on arable land. Off-farm income has increased household income without increasing land requirements, or maintained household income despite reduced farm sizes.⁶⁶

Rural Landless: Status Origins from Rural Poverty

A host of factors including the availability of land, the location of industry, the development of infrastructure (such as roads, markets and power) and the provision of services (such as education and medical care) combine and intertwine to create income-generating opportunities on the one hand, and on the other hand ensure people's ability to exploit these opportunities. The scarcity of these opportunities in the rural areas and problems of exploiting them puts rural residents at a disadvantage relative to urban residents.

The dual criteria of lack of access to income-earning opportunities and services was used in Kenya's Fourth Development Plan to

identify the main poverty groups. These groups listed below are, as one would expect, mostly found in the rural areas.

- i) *Pastoralists* — those whose incomes derive mainly from the care of livestock in a nomadic setting.
- ii) *Small farmers* — those with land who derive the majority, but usually not all, of their incomes from working on land.
- iii) *Landless rural workers* — those who have little or no land and who derive the majority, perhaps all of their income from casual farm employment and on-farm rural activities.
- iv) *Urban poor* — those who live in poverty in the urban areas with limited incomes derived from casual self or wage employment.
- v) *The handicapped* — those who must be given skills commensurate with their abilities and opportunities to use those skills productively.⁶⁷

This grouping is supported by figures compiled by the World Bank which identify widespread poverty among six segments of the population: migration pastoralists, landless with poor occupations, dryland migrants, sedentary pastoralists, squatters and low income smallholders.

*Table 25:
Percentage within subgroups below the Poverty Line**

| Rural group | % with group below the poverty line |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Large/intermediate farmers | 0 |
| Smallholders | 29 |
| Migrants to drylands | 55 |
| Squatters | 33 |
| Migratory pastoralists | 85 |
| Sedentary pastoralists | 33 |
| Landless with good occupations | 0 |
| Landless with poor occupations | 50 |

**Based on the work of Collier and Lal (1977) who used an income of under Shs. 2,000/- per year (in 1974) as Poverty Line in rural Kenya.*

Source: World Bank 1, (1982) p. 2.

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In Kenya, the low-income smallholders constitute the largest segment of poverty. Furthermore progressive fragmentation of holdings has been an important contributory factor to their poverty. This is evidenced by the strong association between the size of holding and family income. In 1974, 49 per cent of the smallholders in the lowest income category had holdings of less than a hectare, and only 5 per cent of the group had holdings of four or more hectares. Overall, the poorest smallholders have less land, earn lower off-farm incomes, use fewer inputs per hectare and have received less formal schooling than the smallholder average as shown in *Table 26*.

Table 26:
Characteristics of the smallholder poor (in KShs. except %)

| | The Poor | | Smallholder Average |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| | 0-999/- p.a. | 1,000-1,999/- p.a. | |
| Farm sales | 191 | 586 | 1,192 |
| Subsistence consumption | 458 | 751 | 1,297 |
| Wages paid | 40 | 46 | 160 |
| Purchased inputs | 50 | 96 | 241 |
| Own produced inputs | 13 | 47 | 84 |
| Farm operating surplus | 129 | 649 | 2,081 |
| Non-farm enterprises surplus | 87 | 170 | 354 |
| Other non-farm income | 335 | 666 | 1,217 |
| Value of land | 951 | 1,084 | 1,820 |
| Value of buildings | 850 | 887 | 1,796 |
| Value of livestock | 1,060 | 1,505 | 2,462 |
| Total assets | 3,150 | 3,954 | 6,905 |
| Total consumption | 1,611 | 2,166 | 3,450 |
| No education (%) | 83% | 87% | 72% |

Source: World Bank 1, 1982, 8. Based on IRS-I

The above groupings of the poor as well as their characterisation, and the strong association between the size of holding and family income, points to a low socio-economic status for the rural landless, particularly those with poor occupations. Those lacking a definite occupation can be viewed as the extreme cases of poverty and can therefore be said to occupy the lowest ranks in the socio-economic ladder.

Status of the Landless

It was estimated in 1976 that roughly, it is 7.3 per cent of the rural population which is landless and likely to be poor. Although information was lacking on their various occupations there was information on agricultural labourers who in any case account for approximately 60 per cent of this grouping. The various indices of their economic status were compared with those of smallholders as shown in *Table 27*.

Table 27:
Income, food consumption and nutrition of labourers and smallholders

| | Labourers | Smallholders | |
|--|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| Basic Characteristics | | | |
| Net household income (s.p.a.) | 1,280 | 3,508 | |
| Household expenditure (s p.a.) | 1,290 | 1,918 | |
| Total acreage owned | 2.06 | 6.56 | |
| Family size (weighed) by calorie intake by age | 4.88 | 6.07 | |
| Per Capita Food Consumption (s.p.a.) | | | |
| Maize | 87 | 80 | |
| Pulses | 11 | 12 | |
| Potatoes | 35 | 52 | |
| Cabbages | 10 | 12 | |
| Milk | 31 | 137 | |
| All food | 286 | 427 | |
| Per Capita Nutrient Intake per Day | | | |
| | Required | Intake | Actual Intake |
| Calories | 2,500 | 2,325 | 2,595 |
| Protein | 65 | 65 | 82 |
| Vitamin A | 2,500 | 414 | 1,124 |
| Fats | | 28 | 45 |
| Riboflavin | 1.33 mg | 0.97 mg | 1.02 mg |

Source: P. Collier and D. Lal, 1979.

The picture emerging from the comparison of indices of their economic status is that the average landless labourer household is much poorer than the average smallholder household. In addition it is estimated that roughly half of the landless labour households fall below the poverty line. In terms of location, it was found that most of the landless agricultural labourers (65 per cent) are in the Rift Valley.

Women-headed Landless Families

It is estimated that among rural smallholder households in Kenya over 70 per cent are headed by males while those headed by females are less than 30 per cent. The proportion of female-headed households is greater in a place like Central Province. At the same time it is significant that in three survey rounds it was found that there is an apparent decline in the ratio of male to female heads.⁶⁸ This points to an increasing number of female-headed households.

Table 28 shows the distribution within the employed labour force of 'class of workers' for the rural and urban sectors by sex. Almost all the women within the rural sector are engaged in small-holding activities while 20 per cent of men are otherwise employed.

If we take Table 28 and Table 29 showing the distribution of the employed labour force by occupation, the significant revelation is the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market. The disadvantaged position of women in the labour market has been identified as the basic cause of poverty for small-holdings run by women. And the traditionally lower levels of educational attainment by women compounds the disadvantage. In brief, the dual employment-educational disadvantage denies such households incremental earnings.⁶⁹

Table 28:

Percentage distribution of employed labour force, by type of employment, by sex and location (1977/78)

| Activity | RURAL | | URBAN | |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Engaged on own household farm | 80.4 | 96.1 | 3.1 | 27.5 |
| Private wage employment | 9.4 | 1.7 | 51.7 | 28.8 |
| Public employment | 5.6 | 0.7 | 30.7 | 22.1 |
| Self-employed | 4.2 | 1.2 | 12.9 | 18.0 |
| Unpaid family worker | 0.3 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 3.4 |
| Employer | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 0.2 |
| TOTAL = 100% | 100.0 | | | |

Source: ROK, IRS Basic Report, 1981, p. 81.

Table 29:
Percentage distribution of employed labour force, by occupational classification, sex and location (1977/78)

| Labour Force | RURAL | | URBAN | |
|---|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Professional and related workers | 2.7 | 0.7 | 10.1 | 14.3 |
| Managerial, administrative and clerical workers | 1.3 | 0.1 | 19.6 | 16.0 |
| Sales workers | 2.3 | 0.9 | 8.1 | 13.3 |
| Service workers | 2.1 | 0.4 | 21.1 | 19.1 |
| Agricultural, forestry and related workers | 85.2 | 97.3 | 4.2 | 28.3 |
| Production, manufacturing and maintenance workers | 3.1 | 0.4 | 22.3 | 10.0 |
| Packing, storage and transport workers | 1.2 | 0.0 | 7.2 | 0.7 |
| General labourers | 2.1 | 0.4 | 7.4 | 2.3 |
| TOTAL = 100% | 100.0 | | | |

Source: ROK, IRS Basic Report (1981) p. 81

Table 30:
Comparative productive assets of male and female-headed smallholdings

| Cash crop production | % | Household head | % |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Married men | Married women % | Unmarried women |
| % growing coffee | 21 | 15 | 13 |
| % growing tea | 9 | 7 | 4 |
| Cattle ownership | | | |
| % no. improved cattle | 74 | 87 | 84 |
| % no. unimproved cattle | 57 | 61 | 66 |
| Monthly off-farm income | | | |
| % no off-farm income | 19 | 22 | 29 |
| % less than 300/- | 55 | 56 | 64 |
| % 300-699/- | 20 | 16 | 5 |
| % 700/- + | 6 | 6 | 2 |
| Size of holding | | | |
| % less than 1 ha. | 45 | 61 | 64 |
| % 1.0 - 1.9 ha. | 20 | 20 | 15 |
| % 2.0 ha. + | 28 | 14 | 17 |

Source: Barnes and Werner, 1982. Based on Division of Labour Module of IRS 4, 1979.

The dual criteria of low incomes and lack of opportunities affects female-headed smallholdings which tend to be poor smallholdings. A distinction should however be made between households headed by women *without* husbands (through death, separation or divorce) and those in which the husband resides at a distance and is in effect absent. In general terms smallholdings headed by women without husbands have less access to productive resources than those operated by women with absentee husbands. But, on average, female-headed households of either type are disadvantaged in comparison with smallholdings operated by resident males. This can be said to be the pattern for female-headed landless families which however tend to be worse off socio-economically than those having smallholdings.

The basic argument behind imputing landlessness of women-headed households to inheritance rights of women is well known. It is said in essence that, especially in patrilineal societies, land ownership rights accrue to males only, such that the male head of household who owns land passes ownership rights to sons and not wives or daughters. It is believed that wives who do not beget sons and daughters who fail to get married or are later divorced consequently end up being landless together with their offsprings. Historically, and in areas where ownership is still gained through inheritance, such as Siaya, South Nyanza, etc., this is generally correct.

However, the situation is changing all over Kenya because of a growing market for land. This is evidenced by an increasing number of those acquiring ownership of land through purchase. The findings on remittances by urban dwellers also show that the cash remittances are mostly spent on buying land which is a highly valued investment.⁷⁰ The significant implication is that income has become a key factor in acquisition and ownership of land making it possible for sons who have no land to inherit, and women without inheritance rights, to buy and own land. The conclusion from this trend is that landlessness of women heads of households will increasingly be attributed, as in the case of most rural landless, to poverty and therefore failure to purchase land. The problem thus goes beyond the inheritance rights of women.

Social Amenities

In the developing countries including Kenya the rural areas are very poorly provided for in terms of social amenities. But the rural areas are not homogeneous regarding the availability and access by the rural population to these social amenities. In contrast to the arid and semi-arid areas, the high potential rural areas have relatively greater access to the amenities despite differences in the degree of access by the various groups of residents. Thus, as a major determinant of availability of social amenities, the rural locality where the rural landless reside is a basic consideration at the national level in assessing their access to these amenities. In brief, it is greater in high potential than arid and semi-arid areas, to take two extreme examples.

Table 31 shows, social amenities in each province, the proportion of the population needing to travel less than 2 kilometres to reach the amenity, and those travelling a longer distance.

It is evident that while Central Province in particular has fairly localised amenities Coast Province is at the opposite extreme having dispersed amenities. Thus, the basic consideration regarding access to social amenities is development in a particular region.

It is also useful in discussing access to the social amenities by the rural landless to differentiate between public goods e.g. roads, fresh water, free health care, etc. and those for which the individual incurs cost e.g. housing, education, tap water, etc. While the rural landless may have easy access to public goods subject to their local availability, their meagre incomes greatly limit access to goods for which payments need to be made. The rural landless are therefore disadvantaged relative to other occupational groups in the rural areas getting higher incomes.

Social Organisation among the Rural Landless

Social organisation among the rural landless must be seen in the broad context of social organisations in the rural setting in which they reside. The purposes served by these organisations are either socio-economic or religious in nature. While the social and much less the economic basis of participation in church groups does not conspicuously isolate

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Table 31:

Percentage distribution of households, by distance to social amenities, by province (IRS-2)

| | Coast | Eastern | Central | Rift Valley | Nyanza | Western | National Total |
|-------------------------------|-------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|---------|----------------|
| Primary School | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 50.9 | 77.7 | 81.7 | 58.9 | 76.0 | 82.9 | 73.2 |
| over 2 km | 49.1 | 22.3 | 18.3 | 41.1 | 24.0 | 17.1 | 26.8 |
| Government Sec. School | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 5.8 | 13.5 | 9.3 | 9.1 | 7.2 | 8.4 | 9.2 |
| over 2 km | 94.2 | 86.5 | 90.7 | 90.9 | 92.8 | 91.6 | 90.8 |
| Harambee Sec. School | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 9.7 | 19.6 | 30.6 | 8.7 | 21.0 | 19.2 | 19.1 |
| over 2 km | 90.3 | 80.4 | 69.4 | 91.3 | 79.0 | 80.8 | 80.9 |
| Health Centre | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 4.7 | 11.9 | 14.1 | 16.4 | 18.1 | 21.1 | 15.5 |
| over 2 km | 95.3 | 88.1 | 85.9 | 83.6 | 81.9 | 78.9 | 84.5 |
| Local Market | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 17.7 | 29.2 | 31.9 | 24.4 | 54.5 | 67.4 | 38.9 |
| over 2 km | 82.3 | 70.8 | 68.1 | 75.6 | 45.5 | 32.6 | 61.1 |
| Duka | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 40.1 | 69.0 | 70.4 | 50.2 | 63.0 | 79.9 | 63.7 |
| over 2 km | 59.9 | 31.0 | 29.6 | 49.8 | 37.0 | 20.1 | 36.3 |
| Co-op. Store | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 10.9 | 22.0 | 27.5 | 7.3 | 22.3 | 13.6 | 18.2 |
| over 2 km | 89.1 | 88.0 | 72.5 | 92.7 | 77.7 | 86.4 | 81.8 |
| Bus Route | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 31.5 | 42.7 | 50.1 | 44.7 | 45.3 | 52.5 | 45.8 |
| over 2 km | 68.5 | 57.3 | 49.9 | 55.3 | 54.7 | 47.5 | 54.2 |
| Matatu Route | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 27.1 | 59.4 | 77.8 | 59.2 | 57.3 | 68.3 | 61.6 |
| over 2 km | 72.9 | 40.6 | 22.2 | 40.8 | 42.8 | 31.7 | 38.4 |
| Water Source | | | | | | | |
| up to 2 km | 71.0 | 80.2 | 98.5 | 86.5 | 88.1 | 97.5 | 88.1 |
| over 2 km | 29.0 | 19.8 | 1.5 | 13.2 | 11.9 | 2.5 | 11.9 |

Source: ROK, IRS Basic Report, 1981, p. 64.

the rural landless as a separate entity, economic differentiation in the rural areas limits their participation in the Socio-economic groups.

There are first kinship based groups which mostly serve social welfare functions but at times get involved in economic development projects. Secondly, there are voluntary harambee self-help local groups that undertake mainly economic development projects but also serve some social welfare functions. There is therefore an overlap in the functions of the two categories of organisations and the difference is basically one of emphasis. However, the main consideration in relation to the rural landless is that in both types of socio-economic groupings, contributions in cash or kind, and quite often both, is a major requirement for individual participation. Therefore, since it is the level of income that determines participation, the rural landless, due to their poverty, tend to be excluded.

It would seem that one kind of organisation in which we would expect to find a significant level of participation by the rural landless are the land buying companies that mushroomed in Kenya since the early 1970s. These companies' membership was not confined to the rural landless as there were also urban dwellers included. And even more importantly, some members were not landless in the first place. Furthermore, for the rural landless who belong to these companies, once land is secured and subdivided, as has been happening lately at the insistence of the Kenya government, they cease to be landless. They are no longer therefore landless and would not organise on the basis of landlessness.

At any rate, rural landlessness has remained the major factor influencing rural-to-rural migration. A case in point is migration from high potential agricultural areas such as Kiambu to pastoral lands of the Maasai in the Rift Valley⁷¹. As most of these landless migrants get pieces of land they actually cease to be landless. However, as a group these migrants get pieces of land they actually cease to be landless. However, as a group these migrants continue to identify on ethnic lines whether they have land or not. The concern therefore become one of future ethnic animosity resulting from migration of the rural landless. This is the development worth watching as opposed to

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social, labour or political organisation of the rural landless per se or even the emergence of a rural landless class which, given the limited numbers of the landless, for the time being is not yet a hot political issues.

Policy Issues on Rural Landlessness

The basic aim of this section is to discuss the pertinent policy issues that have arisen due to the emergence of the problem of rural landlessness. There is first a concern over weaknesses of available data, mainly because of gaps, which greatly limit their use for the purposes of measurement of the problem as well as policy formulation and action. The second area of concern is finding ways and means of arresting, if not solving, the problem. In other words, what policies can be recommended which would improve inputs, farm and non-farm employment prospects, employment conditions and socio-economic conditions.

Conceptual and Measurement Problems

There are conceptual definitional problems one encounters in trying to address the rural landlessness problem. It is in fact mainly due to definitional discrepancies that data already collected has not proved particularly useful in the assessment of rural landlessness. Furthermore definitional problems have made it difficult especially to compare data obtained from different surveys and/or sources.

The surveys so far conducted in Kenya by the Central Bureau of Statistics mostly focus on the household, either as the sampling unit or enumeration unit. The key problem here is that there has not been a consistent definition of this term as noted earlier in our discussion. An important consequence of this inconsistency in the use of such terms and concepts for the researchers is the inability to compare data from different surveys on variables such as household head, composition, income and expenditure; and ownership; migration etc. In the circumstances, it has been difficult to establish trends which is essential for mapping out the yearly mounting problem of landlessness.

The differences in both timing and coverage have also negatively affected comparability and accuracy of data. There has been irregular and haphazard timing of surveys which has meant that systematically consistent socio-economic data has not been generated overtime. It would seem that data surveys have been undertaken when resources are available or when specifically requested for by a government department and there is a sponsor for the survey. But such data, often also lacking detailed information, have turned out to be of limited utility in an assessment of continuous process of land concentration or growing landlessness as well as other pervasive socio-economic processes such as poverty growth. It should also be noted that such irregularly collected data are particularly deficient in estimating household standard of living using levels of incomes or consumption which often prove under-reporting in the developing countries including Kenya.

The data available is also highly aggregated at the national, provincial and at times district levels. This poses a major problem for identification of target socio-economic groups such as the rural landless. The disaggregation at the district level only, if the sampling unit is the household, is likely to exclude certain disadvantaged socio-economic groups such as the rural landless. This is all the more likely if the focus is on smallholders as has actually been the case in the extensive data collected in the various integrated rural surveys in Kenya. For instance, although the smallholder household may have some land, depending on the size of the land and household composition, individuals in that household may actually be landless.

The foregoing data gaps point to the need first, to have a consistent definition of key concepts such as household, smallholder, rural landlessness etc. Secondly, sampling methodology should take into account socio-economic differences within the household. There is also the need to disaggregate data below the district to be able to identify the disadvantaged groups including the landless whose welfare is to be improved. The available data has been good in showing regional disparities but not the socio-economic conditions of the disadvantaged groups.⁷² Thirdly, there is need for data collection

on a regular basis as is indeed the case with population censuses and is also the practice in preparation of development plans.

Policy Strategy

The existing policy strategy and development programmes in Kenya have generally not focused on the rural landless. The prevailing dichotomy between rural and urban areas is as a result of a policy trend favouring the urban areas. In agriculture, policies have similarly favoured modern sector cash crop and livestock production in high and medium potential areas. This is the pattern followed by policies for Africanisation of agriculture through settlement in the former White Highlands and more recently witnessed in large-scale irrigation settlement schemes. It is these policies in the agricultural sector which have in turn shaped land use and ownership patterns which, coupled with fast population growth, are causing increasing landlessness in the rural areas.

The key to solving the problem of rural landlessness therefore lies in a change in the overall development and policy strategy. A significant move in this direction has been greater emphasis put on food crop production following the recent food crisis. The impact of this particular policy change notwithstanding, the point being made is that it is in the context of changes in the national development policy objectives and strategies that policy recommendations for improving the condition of the rural landless may have positive impact.

Thus so long as there is a bias in policy favouring production for the market, land allocation and use will be directed towards this purpose. This is obviously to the disadvantage of poor groups particularly the rural landless. The privatisation of land ownership and the growing market for land, which is resulting in ever increasing prices of land, has meant that acquisition of land through purchase has virtually gone out of reach of the poor rural landless. As this process continues even land that is currently available to the rural landless, as gift or through renting, will cease to be allocated in this manner as the owners find more lucrative use for their pieces of land. This points to subsequent non-availability of land even for purchase while landlessness grows.

The apparent major problem that government policy needs to tackle to improve access to land is the ownership and distribution of land, given the indications already of land concentration and holding for speculative purposes. There is pressing need for an upper limit or ceiling of land or food crop production. Land not put to productive use as stipulated should then be taxed. While these policy measures will release some land for acquisition by the rural landless, in government settlement programmes, especially irrigation projects, deliberate effort should be made to incorporate the rural landless.

As regards access to production inputs such as credit, fertiliser etc. and extension services, these are tied to access or ownership of land in the first place. It was as late as ten years after independence that one could obtain farm credit for cash crop growing only, and there was a credit programme requiring ownership of 15 acres to qualify for a loan. Likewise extension advice has been directed to progressive or large farmers and cash crops have been the main focus. The implication here is that for any policy measure aimed at improving access to production inputs and extension services to have positive impact for the rural landless, there is a prerequisite of change of outlook of institutions responsible particularly in their cash crops bias. There is also need for a change of strategy for providing inputs and extension services, from allowing access by individuals to giving access to the needy, such as the rural landless, as groups.

In terms of employment and social services needs of the rural landless, it is only a broad-based policy for development of the rural areas, specifically aimed at increasing employment opportunities, which can go a long way in bringing about an improvement in their socio-economic conditions. The major factor behind out migration from the rural areas has for long been known to be limited income earning opportunities. Those having at least some land can be able to meet part of their subsistence requirements by growing some food while the landless are forced to get farm or non-farm jobs failing which they have to migrate to satisfy the subsistence needs.

The key to realising the necessary level of rural development to limit outmigration is to transform agricultural production for the

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majority of the farmers to be producing a surplus instead of production to only meet subsistence demands. On the one hand this means that production will require more labour and there will therefore be more employment opportunities on the farm particularly for the landless. On the other hand, the increased production will mean higher earnings for farmers and their workers which will give a boost to effective demand in the rural areas.

The resulting effect of a higher level of effective demand is increased non-farm activity particularly of the informal sector type which also yield more employment opportunities.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The historical origins of rural landlessness can be traced to the beginning of colonisation. There were prior to colonisation, various African land tenure systems in which there were different forms of land ownership but in all of them landlessness was virtually non-existent. It was thus the change in these land tenure systems brought about by the introduction of capitalist mode of production through colonisation that marked the beginnings of the landlessness problem. The decisive move taken by the colonial administration was the alienation of the best agricultural land for European settlement, designated White Highlands, while Africans were relegated to the reserves. A significant consequence of this new arrangement of land ownership and use was the emergence of wage and/or squatting labourers working on land owned by Europeans and not themselves as in the pre-colonial period.

It is estimated that by the end of the colonial period a total of more than 7.5 million acres had been alienated to a small minority of Europeans while for the majority Africans only 11.7 million acres was available for cultivation. This gave the Europeans an average of 135 acres per person and Africans a tiny 1.5 acres per person. The area where most land was alienated is Rift Valley province while the groups affected most by the land alienation process were the Maasai and Kikuyu ethnic groups. By 1945 there were about 203,000 squatters and labourers on European farms of whom 101,000 were Kikuyu resident labourers. The number of Kikuyu landless is also estimated to have reached more than 90,000 families by the end of 1959.

The ultimate goal of the colonial administration was to institutionalise the status of landlessness. Colonial efforts to proletarianise the Africans by forcing or hiring them in European farms as wage labourers or squatters can be viewed as early evidence

of such intentions. It was however later in 1953 that the goal was explicitly stated in the Swynnerton Plan. The crux of the plan was the introduction of Western private property rights to African land ownership by arranging for individual ownership titles following consolidation and registration of one's land. Swynnerton thus envisaged the emergence of a middle class who would be the owners of economical holdings and a landless class who would be employed in those holdings to satisfy their subsistence needs.

However, as a solution to the landlessness problem the Swynnerton Plan had inherent shortcomings. There was the problem of employment opportunities both within and outside agriculture growing at such a low rate that for the majority of Africans some form of dependence on a piece of land for at least part of their subsistence was inevitable. This reinforced the strong feeling towards land among Africans in which land ownership has been viewed as an important part of one's social and cultural life in that land provides one with a home and is therefore a source of identity. This strong attachment to land, in the face of the new terms of land ownership introduced by the Swynnerton Plan, has meant first, the continuing subdivision of family holdings resulting in growing landlessness. Secondly, individual land ownership has given rise to land concentration in a few hands of those who can purchase land which also contributes to growing landlessness. It is this group of those who are financially able that mostly have taken advantage of settlement programmes especially in the former European farms and not the landless.

The phenomenon of landlessness is now recognised and the problem is known to be on the increase. However, a definition of landlessness which allows for enumeration of landless persons overtime is problematic. The realities of the Kenya situation makes a definition of the rural landless only as rural households with no land or permanent employment deficient, particularly if we are interested in mapping out the problem over a period of time to ascertain its growth trend. The acquisition of land either within or outside the original place of residence of the landless renders such persons no longer landless. This has been the effect of government settlement

schemes particularly for the wealthy landless. The indication here is that rural landlessness is a transient phenomenon in certain situations.

The various definitions of the household have also posed problems for definition of landlessness and identification of the rural landless. These definitions of the household have not clearly brought out the family ties and cultural traits which influence land ownership and use. Specifically, subdivision of land within the household which has left some members without land and others with small uneconomical pieces of land that makes them virtually landless has been concealed due to viewing the household as a unit.

The nature of employment and incomes in the rural areas also poses problems for an accurate identification of the rural landless. In Kenya, the majority in the labour force are self-employed in agriculture evidenced by the fact that approximately 60 per cent of smallholders derive their income from farm operating surplus. The main problem is therefore trying to ascertain employment levels and incomes for subsistence farming operations. The crux of the problem is that for Kenya, no national data is available on either the incomes of non-estate agricultural labourers, or the rate of expansion of such employment.

The concern with the rural poor in the mid seventies provided pointers to the problem of landlessness especially among the rural poor. This led to attention being directed towards drawing the poverty-line so as to identify target groups for policy action. It was arrived at either by computing a certain level of income or identifying some minimum required standard of nutrition. In Kenya, the poverty-line suggested by the alternative approaches coincided according to 1974 data.

The grouping of households on the basis of income and employment in 1976 gave a figure of 7.3 per cent landless rural households for all Kenya. Furthermore, it was found out that there is an overlap between the landless poor and agricultural wage labourers. It should however be pointed out that any income level which defines the criterion for "poverty" is essentially arbitrary and is for the purpose of comparing one rural group with another which is better off.

In this connection the finding that areas having a higher concentration of landless poor are not the area of highest smallholder poverty is significant. Poverty may be closely correlated with land ownership or it may be correlated with absence of off-farm income. It is because of this correlation between poverty and a number of other factors, not just landlessness, that a direct link between landlessness and poverty is difficult to make.

The basic underlying cause of rural landlessness in the Kenyan context is the scarcity of good agricultural land seen in conjunction with population distribution and a high rate of population growth. But there is also evidence of increasing land concentration resulting from privatisation of land and subsequent establishment of a land market. This is the main force behind growing landlessness. Although there is still a prevalence of acquisition of land through inheritance there is evidence of an increase in acquisition of land through purchase.

Kiambu district was chosen as a case study because it is one of the hardest hit districts by landlessness problem and can give one a useful impression of the nature and dynamics of the problem of landlessness in Kenya. Land has become a very sensitive political and economic issue in Kiambu. But there is at any rate a market for land evidenced by a higher percentage of those who have acquired land through purchase and the extremely high prices of land in the district. All the same, there is an incessant quest for land as clearly demonstrated by the mushrooming of land buying companies mainly to secure land for one's off-springs.

There is clear evidence of growing landlessness in Kiambu. This can be attributed to the expropriation of land mainly during the colonial period that has left most of the landless living in the villages. Also, the fast growing population is aggravating the landlessness situation. As a group, these landless persons can be identified as those having no land at all or having only one-quarter of an acre which is inadequate to meet subsistence requirements. It is estimated that there are about 60,300 such households in Kiambu.

But one should not forget that alongside the growing landlessness there is land concentration evidenced by large-scale ownership of

the rural landless as a separate entity, economic differentiation in the rural areas limits their participation in the Socio-economic groups.

There are first kinship based groups which mostly serve social welfare functions but at times get involved in economic development projects. Secondly, there are voluntary harambee self-help local groups that undertake mainly economic development projects but also serve some social welfare functions. There is therefore an overlap in the functions of the two categories of organisations and the difference is basically one of emphasis. However, the main consideration in relation to the rural landless is that in both types of socio-economic groupings, contributions in cash or kind, and quite often both, is a major requirement for individual participation. Therefore, since it is the level of income that determines participation, the rural landless, due to their poverty, tend to be excluded.

It would seem that one kind of organisation in which we would expect to find a significant level of participation by the rural landless are the land buying companies that mushroomed in Kenya since the early 1970s. These companies' membership was not confined to the rural landless as there were also urban dwellers included. And even more importantly, some members were not landless in the first place. Furthermore, for the rural landless who belong to these companies, once land is secured and subdivided, as has been happening lately at the insistence of the Kenya government, they cease to be landless. They are no longer therefore landless and would not organise on the basis of landlessness.

At any rate, rural landlessness has remained the major factor influencing rural-to-rural migration. A case in point is migration from high potential agricultural areas such as Kiambu to pastoral lands of the Maasai in the Rift Valley⁷¹. As most of these landless migrants get pieces of land they actually cease to be landless. However, as a group these migrants get pieces of land they actually cease to be landless. However, as a group these migrants continue to identify on ethnic lines whether they have land or not. The concern therefore become one of future ethnic animosity resulting from migration of the rural landless. This is the development worth watching as opposed to

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The basic aim of this section is to discuss the pertinent policy issues that have arisen due to the emergence of the problem of rural landlessness. There is first a concern over weaknesses of available data, mainly because of gaps, which greatly limit their use for the purposes of measurement of the problem as well as policy formulation and action. The second area of concern is finding ways and means of arresting, if not solving, the problem. In other words, what policies can be recommended which would improve inputs, farm and non-farm employment prospects, employment conditions and socio-economic conditions.

Conceptual and Measurement Problems

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The differences in both timing and coverage have also negatively affected comparability and accuracy of data. There has been irregular and haphazard timing of surveys which has meant that systematically consistent socio-economic data has not been generated overtime. It would seem that data surveys have been undertaken when resources are available or when specifically requested for by a government department and there is a sponsor for the survey. But such data, often also lacking detailed information, have turned out to be of limited utility in an assessment of continuous process of land concentration or growing landlessness as well as other pervasive socio-economic processes such as poverty growth. It should also be noted that such irregularly collected data are particularly deficient in estimating household standard of living using levels of incomes or consumption which often prove under-reporting in the developing countries including Kenya.

The data available is also highly aggregated at the national, provincial and at times district levels. This poses a major problem for identification of target socio-economic groups such as the rural landless. The disaggregation at the district level only, if the sampling unit is the household, is likely to exclude certain disadvantaged socio-economic groups such as the rural landless. This is all the more likely if the focus is on smallholders as has actually been the case in the extensive data collected in the various integrated rural surveys in Kenya. For instance, although the smallholder household may have some land, depending on the size of the land and household composition, individuals in that household may actually be landless.

The foregoing data gaps point to the need first, to have a consistent definition of key concepts such as household, smallholder, rural landlessness etc. Secondly, sampling methodology should take into account socio-economic differences within the household. There is also the need to disaggregate data below the district to be able to identify the disadvantaged groups including the landless whose welfare is to be improved. The available data has been good in showing regional disparities but not the socio-economic conditions of the disadvantaged groups.⁷² Thirdly, there is need for data collection

on a regular basis as is indeed the case with population censuses and is also the practice in preparation of development plans.

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The existing policy strategy and development programmes in Kenya have generally not focused on the rural landless. The prevailing dichotomy between rural and urban areas is as a result of a policy trend favouring the urban areas. In agriculture, policies have similarly favoured modern sector cash crop and livestock production in high and medium potential areas. This is the pattern followed by policies for Africanisation of agriculture through settlement in the former White Highlands and more recently witnessed in large-scale irrigation settlement schemes. It is these policies in the agricultural sector which have in turn shaped land use and ownership patterns which, coupled with fast population growth, are causing increasing landlessness in the rural areas.

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Thus so long as there is a bias in policy favouring production for the market, land allocation and use will be directed towards this purpose. This is obviously to the disadvantage of poor groups particularly the rural landless. The privatisation of land ownership and the growing market for land, which is resulting in ever increasing prices of land, has meant that acquisition of land through purchase has virtually gone out of reach of the poor rural landless. As this process continues even land that is currently available to the rural landless, as gift or through renting, will cease to be allocated in this manner as the owners find more lucrative use for their pieces of land. This points to subsequent non-availability of land even for purchase while landlessness grows.

The apparent major problem that government policy needs to tackle to improve access to land is the ownership and distribution of land, given the indications already of land concentration and holding for speculative purposes. There is pressing need for an upper limit or ceiling of land or food crop production. Land not put to productive use as stipulated should then be taxed. While these policy measures will release some land for acquisition by the rural landless, in government settlement programmes, especially irrigation projects, deliberate effort should be made to incorporate the rural landless.

As regards access to production inputs such as credit, fertiliser etc. and extension services, these are tied to access or ownership of land in the first place. It was as late as ten years after independence that one could obtain farm credit for cash crop growing only, and there was a credit programme requiring ownership of 15 acres to qualify for a loan. Likewise extension advice has been directed to progressive or large farmers and cash crops have been the main focus. The implication here is that for any policy measure aimed at improving access to production inputs and extension services to have positive impact for the rural landless, there is a prerequisite of change of outlook of institutions responsible particularly in their cash crops bias. There is also need for a change of strategy for providing inputs and extension services, from allowing access by individuals to giving access to the needy, such as the rural landless, as groups.

In terms of employment and social services needs of the rural landless, it is only a broad-based policy for development of the rural areas, specifically aimed at increasing employment opportunities, which can go a long way in bringing about an improvement in their socio-economic conditions. The major factor behind out migration from the rural areas has for long been known to be limited income earning opportunities. Those having at least some land can be able to meet part of their subsistence requirements by growing some food while the landless are forced to get farm or non-farm jobs failing which they have to migrate to satisfy the subsistence needs.

The key to realising the necessary level of rural development to limit outmigration is to transform agricultural production for the

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majority of the farmers to be producing a surplus instead of production to only meet subsistence demands. On the one hand this means that production will require more labour and there will therefore be more employment opportunities on the farm particularly for the landless. On the other hand, the increased production will mean higher earnings for farmers and their workers which will give a boost to effective demand in the rural areas.

The resulting effect of a higher level of effective demand is increased non-farm activity particularly of the informal sector type which also yield more employment opportunities.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The historical origins of rural landlessness can be traced to the beginning of colonisation. There were prior to colonisation, various African land tenure systems in which there were different forms of land ownership but in all of them landlessness was virtually non-existent. It was thus the change in these land tenure systems brought about by the introduction of capitalist mode of production through colonisation that marked the beginnings of the landlessness problem. The decisive move taken by the colonial administration was the alienation of the best agricultural land for European settlement, designated White Highlands, while Africans were relegated to the reserves. A significant consequence of this new arrangement of land ownership and use was the emergence of wage and/or squatting labourers working on land owned by Europeans and not themselves as in the pre-colonial period.

It is estimated that by the end of the colonial period a total of more than 7.5 million acres had been alienated to a small minority of Europeans while for the majority Africans only 11.7 million acres was available for cultivation. This gave the Europeans an average of 135 acres per person and Africans a tiny 1.5 acres per person. The area where most land was alienated is Rift Valley province while the groups affected most by the land alienation process were the Maasai and Kikuyu ethnic groups. By 1945 there were about 203,000 squatters and labourers on European farms of whom 101,000 were Kikuyu resident labourers. The number of Kikuyu landless is also estimated to have reached more than 90,000 families by the end of 1959.

The ultimate goal of the colonial administration was to institutionalise the status of landlessness. Colonial efforts to proletarianise the Africans by forcing or hiring them in European farms as wage labourers or squatters can be viewed as early evidence

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of such intentions. It was however later in 1953 that the goal was explicitly stated in the Swynnerton Plan. The crux of the plan was the introduction of Western private property rights to African land ownership by arranging for individual ownership titles following consolidation and registration of one's land. Swynnerton thus envisaged the emergence of a middle class who would be the owners of economical holdings and a landless class who would be employed in those holdings to satisfy their subsistence needs.

However, as a solution to the landlessness problem the Swynnerton Plan had inherent shortcomings. There was the problem of employment opportunities both within and outside agriculture growing at such a low rate that for the majority of Africans some form of dependence on a piece of land for at least part of their subsistence was inevitable. This reinforced the strong feeling towards land among Africans in which land ownership has been viewed as an important part of one's social and cultural life in that land provides one with a home and is therefore a source of identity. This strong attachment to land, in the face of the new terms of land ownership introduced by the Swynnerton Plan, has meant first, the continuing subdivision of family holdings resulting in growing landlessness. Secondly, individual land ownership has given rise to land concentration in a few hands of those who can purchase land which also contributes to growing landlessness. It is this group of those who are financially able that mostly have taken advantage of settlement programmes especially in the former European farms and not the landless.

The phenomenon of landlessness is now recognised and the problem is known to be on the increase. However, a definition of landlessness which allows for enumeration of landless persons overtime is problematic. The realities of the Kenya situation makes a definition of the rural landless only as rural households with no land or permanent employment deficient, particularly if we are interested in mapping out the problem over a period of time to ascertain its growth trend. The acquisition of land either within or outside the original place of residence of the landless renders such persons no longer landless. This has been the effect of government settlement

schemes particularly for the wealthy landless. The indication here is that rural landlessness is a transient phenomenon in certain situations.

The various definitions of the household have also posed problems for definition of landlessness and identification of the rural landless. These definitions of the household have not clearly brought out the family ties and cultural traits which influence land ownership and use. Specifically, subdivision of land within the household which has left some members without land and others with small uneconomical pieces of land that makes them virtually landless has been concealed due to viewing the household as a unit.

The nature of employment and incomes in the rural areas also poses problems for an accurate identification of the rural landless. In Kenya, the majority in the labour force are self-employed in agriculture evidenced by the fact that approximately 60 per cent of smallholders derive their income from farm operating surplus. The main problem is therefore trying to ascertain employment levels and incomes for subsistence farming operations. The crux of the problem is that for Kenya, no national data is available on either the incomes of non-estate agricultural labourers, or the rate of expansion of such employment.

The concern with the rural poor in the mid seventies provided pointers to the problem of landlessness especially among the rural poor. This led to attention being directed towards drawing the poverty-line so as to identify target groups for policy action. It was arrived at either by computing a certain level of income or identifying some minimum required standard of nutrition. In Kenya, the poverty-line suggested by the alternative approaches coincided according to 1974 data.

The grouping of households on the basis of income and employment in 1976 gave a figure of 7.3 per cent landless rural households for all Kenya. Furthermore, it was found out that there is an overlap between the landless poor and agricultural wage labourers. It should however be pointed out that any income level which defines the criterion for "poverty" is essentially arbitrary and is for the purpose of comparing one rural group with another which is better off.

In this connection the finding that areas having a higher concentration of landless poor are not the area of highest smallholder poverty is significant. Poverty may be closely correlated with land ownership or it may be correlated with absence of off-farm income. It is because of this correlation between poverty and a number of other factors, not just landlessness, that a direct link between landlessness and poverty is difficult to make.

The basic underlying cause of rural landlessness in the Kenyan context is the scarcity of good agricultural land seen in conjunction with population distribution and a high rate of population growth. But there is also evidence of increasing land concentration resulting from privatisation of land and subsequent establishment of a land market. This is the main force behind growing landlessness. Although there is still a prevalence of acquisition of land through inheritance there is evidence of an increase in acquisition of land through purchase.

Kiambu district was chosen as a case study because it is one of the hardest hit districts by landlessness problem and can give one a useful impression of the nature and dynamics of the problem of landlessness in Kenya. Land has become a very sensitive political and economic issue in Kiambu. But there is at any rate a market for land evidenced by a higher percentage of those who have acquired land through purchase and the extremely high prices of land in the district. All the same, there is an incessant quest for land as clearly demonstrated by the mushrooming of land buying companies mainly to secure land for one's off-springs.

There is clear evidence of growing landlessness in Kiambu. This can be attributed to the expropriation of land mainly during the colonial period that has left most of the landless living in the villages. Also, the fast growing population is aggravating the landlessness situation. As a group, these landless persons can be identified as those having no land at all or having only one-quarter of an acre which is inadequate to meet subsistence requirements. It is estimated that there are about 60,300 such households in Kiambu.

But one should not forget that alongside the growing landlessness there is land concentration evidenced by large-scale ownership of

land by individuals and companies. These are the tea and coffee estates in which the landless seek work as agricultural labourers. Another source of income for the landless is petty trade and some seek employment in the nearby city of Nairobi. Also some of the landless are still able to get access to small pieces of land as gifts or through renting. It is these arrangements of the landless for purposes of survival which greatly limit the enumeration of the landless in the Kenyan context although the problem has been recognised and is known to be growing.

The objectives of land reforms initiated by the colonial administration and carried out by the post-colonial state included first, the need to contain political dissent highlighted by the Mau Mau movement. Secondly, there was the need for legal changes in relation to land ownership involving a move from customary land tenure to private (capitalist) ownership of land, with the resultant issue of title deeds. Thirdly, there was the objective of expanding cash crop production among the Africans who in the early stage of colonial development were left out by settler interests. The main consideration in the agrarian land reform objectives has therefore been the transition from colonial to independent Kenya economy.

The policies were initially intended to deal with land scarcity and thereby diffuse political instability which land alienation in the early stages of colonisation had provoked. This was closely linked to the increased attention the independent government gave to commercial cash crop production. It can be said that it is this commodity production which has formed the cornerstone of agricultural modernisation, settlement and irrigation programmes.

The main consequence of these policies has been increased differentiation between the rich and poor peasants that has given rise to landlessness. The policies have in addition been reinforced by the penetration of capital for production of commodities like tea, coffee, sugar, milk, etc. An important effect of the latter development has been availability of employment for the landless as agricultural labourers. Otherwise agrarian reform policies have not directly focused on the rural landless apart from policy pronouncements that have fallen short of implementation.

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In terms of socio-economic status of the rural landless, it is poverty and location in the rural areas which limit their access to the means to satisfy their basic needs that relegate them to a low status. Employment in the rural areas, where the majority population including the rural landless live, is mostly in the agricultural sector where the earnings are the lowest. It needs, however, to be emphasised that most people are self-employed and not in wage employment.

But there is a diversity of off-farm activity which contributes a significant portion of incomes of smallholding families. The poor rural landless serve mainly as a source of labour and are even more dependent on off-farm income earning opportunities. These off-farm income earning opportunities have thus contributed to the holding power of the rural areas in the face of growing landlessness. However, overall, the comparison of indices of their economic status shows that the average landless labour household is much poorer than the average smallholder household. In addition, roughly half of the landless labour fall below the poverty-line. And in Kenya, most of the landless agricultural labourers are in the Rift Valley.

There is an indication of an increase in number of female-headed households from data showing an apparent decline of the ratio of male to female heads. The female-headed households are the ones which face the dual employment-educational disadvantage which denies them incremental earnings. An important distinction is between households headed by women *without* husbands and those in which the husband resides at a distance and is in effect absent. In general terms those without husbands suffer greater disadvantages. They, for instance, cannot invoke inheritance rights to land which still is the prevalent mode of land acquisition.

The provision of social amenities is generally poor in the rural areas in the developing countries and this affects all rural residents including the poor. However, in cases where the services are to be paid for and are therefore not public goods, poverty of the rural landless limits their access to such social amenities. Likewise, socio-economic groups in which income is the key determinant of participation, they would tend to be excluded from and the only social security would

seem to be family or kinship bonds. These kinship bonds are superseded by ethnic bonds among rural landless migrants who settle outside their original ethnic territory.

As the problem of rural landlessness is growing, pertinent policy issues have arisen regarding ways and means of solving the problem. But preceding the formulation of appropriate policies is to have information for a clear understanding of the problem. It is precisely at this stage that major difficulties are encountered. There is glaring weaknesses of available data mainly because of gaps which greatly limit their use for the purposes of measurement of the problem as well as policy formulation and action.

A major conceptual definitional problem has been encountered with regard to the household unit in Kenya which has been a major obstacle in establishing the trend of landlessness. Other problems have to do with the timing of data collection, coverage of data collected and the level of aggregation of the data. The data gaps point to the need to have a consistent definition of key concepts such as household, smallholder, landlessness etc.; need to aggregate data below the district and specifically identify disadvantaged groups; and the need for data collection on a regular basis.

As regards ways and means of solving the landlessness problem, the key lies in a change in the overall development and policy strategy which has been biased towards commercial cash crop production and to the neglect of food production. This is what has shaped land allocation and use patterns and given rise to landlessness as the population has grown at a fast rate. The bias of agricultural production for the market is at the root of the problem and therefore calls for a change.

At the same time there is need also for government policy action to affect ownership and distribution of land so that land concentration and holding for speculative purposes is curbed. A ceiling on land ownership and a tax on land not put to productive use would seem an appropriate policy action. While such policy measures could release some land which the rural landless could acquire, in government settlement programmes, especially irrigation projects, deliberate

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effort should be made to incorporate the rural landless. The other policies giving the rural landless access to production inputs and extension services are likely to fall in place once the landless have land and the outlook of the institutions concerned changes from a preoccupation with commercial cash crop production.

Finally, in terms of employment and social services needs of the rural landless, it is only a broad based policy for development of the rural areas, specifically aimed at increasing employment opportunities, which can go a long way in bringing about an improvement in their socio-economic conditions. This calls for a transformation of agricultural production of the majority of the farmers to be able to produce a surplus and not just for subsistence. This is likely to raise the effective demand in the rural areas and give a boost to non-farm informal sector activity that will be additional sources of income earnings.

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